DISCOURSES

ON SEVERAL

Important Subjects.

To which are added,

EIGHT SERMONS

PREACHED AT THE

Lady *MOYER*'s LECTURE,

IN THE

Cathedral Church of St. *Paul*, *London*.

By *JEREMIAH SEED*, M. A.

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THE CONTENTS OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

SERMON I.

THE Notion of Pride ſtated, and the Pretenſions to it examined.

ROMANS XII. 3.

Not to think of himſelf more highly than he ought to think, but to think ſoberly. P. 1.

SERMON II.

On the Advantages of Affliction.

PSALM LXXVII. 3.

When I am in Heavineſs, I will think upon God. 33

SERMON III.

On Faith, Benevolence, *&c.*

1 TIMOTHY I. 19.

Holding Faith, and a good Conſcience. 63

SERMON IV.

The Nature and Duration of future Puniſhments conſidered; and the Goodneſs of God fully vindicated, as to that Article, againſt the principal Objections of ſome late Writers.

MATTHEW XXVI. 24.

It had been good for that Man, if he had not been born. 95

The CONTENTS.

SERMON V.

The Nature, Poſſibility, and Truth of a particular Providence ſet forth.

PSALM CXVIII. 5.

Who is like unto the Lord our God, who hath his Dwelling ſo high; and yet humbleth himſelf to behold the Things that are in Heaven and Earth? P. 131

SERMON VI.

The intrinſic Excellency of the Scriptures, a Proof of their divine Inſpiration.

1 PETER III 15.

Be ready always to give an Anſwer to every Man that aſketh you a Reaſon of the Hope that is in you. 167

SERMON VII.

The intrinſic Excellency of the Scriptures, a Proof of their divine Inſpiration.

1 PETER III. 15.

Be ready always to give an Anſwer to every Man that aſketh you a Reaſon of the Hope, that is in you. 203

Eight SERMONS.

On the Evidences of Chriſtianity, the Corruption of our Nature; the Redemption, and the TRINITY.

SER-

The CONTENTS.

SERMON I.

On the Truth of Chriſtianity.

JOHN III. 2.

Rabbi, we know, that thou art a Teacher, come from God: For no Man can do theſe Miracles, that thou doeſt, except God be with him. P. 237

SERMON II.

On the Evidences of Chriſtianity.

JOHN III. 2.

Rabbi, we know, that thou art a Teacher, come from God: For no Man can do theſe Miracles, that thou doeſt, except God be with him. 265

SERMON III.

On the Genuineneſs and Inſpiration of the Sacred Writers.

1 THESS. II. 13.

When ye received the Word of God, which ye heard of us; ye received it not as the Word of Men, but (as it is in Truth) the Word of God. 291

SERMON IV.

On the Corruption of human Nature.

JOB XIV. 3, 4.

Doſt thou open thine Eyes upon ſuch an one? and bringeſt me into Judgment with thee? Who can bring a clean Thing out of an Unclean? Not one. 331

SER-

The CONTENTS.

SERMON V.

On the REDEMPTION.

1 PETER III. 18.

Chriſt alſo hath once ſuffered for Sins, the Juſt for the Unjuſt, that he might bring us unto God. P. 359

SERMON VI.

On the REDEMPTION.

1 PETER III. 18.

Chriſt hath alſo once ſuffered for Sins, the Juſt for the Unjuſt, that he might bring us unto God. 385

SERMON VII.

On the Doctrine of the TRINITY.

MATTHEW XXVIII. 19.

Go ye therefore, and teach all Nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt. 417

SERMON VIII.

On the Doctrine of the TRINITY.

MATTHEW XXVIII. 19.

Go ye therefore, and teach all Nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt. 443

SERMON I.

The Notion of Pride ſtated, and the Pretenſions to it examined.

ROMANS XII. 3.

Not to think of himſelf more highly than he ought to think, but to think ſoberly.

IT is a common Obſervation, that however forward Men may be to repine at the unequal Portion which God has allotted them of worldly Bleſſings; yet they are generally well ſatisfied with their Share of inward Endowments: it being as hard to meet with a Perſon, who humbly thinks he has too little Senſe and Merit, as it is to find one, who fanſies he has too great Riches and Honours. SERM. I.

What makes Men uneaſy in their Circumſtances, is that they are continually ſetting to View the *bright* Side of *themſelves*, and the *dark* Side of their *Condition* in Life;

SERM. I. the firſt to find out their own Grievances, and the laſt to diſcern their own Faults and Follies. Whereas if they took a contrary Method, they would perceive, that God had been kinder to the Worſt of Men, than the very Beſt of Men could deſerve.

Self-Love is a Paſſion interwoven in our Frame and Conſtitution; and if it be not kept under due Regulations, Self-Conceit will be the neceſſary Effect of it. For ſince we are apt to believe, what we wiſh to be true; Is it a Wonder, if we over-rate thoſe Perfections, which we have, and imagine ourſelves poſſeſt of thoſe, which we have no Title to?

In our Youth, Pleaſure has often the Aſcendant; in the Middle of our Age Ambition; and Avarice brings up the Rear at the Cloſe of Life. But this Vice, of which I am ſpeaking, attends too many of us from the Cradle to the Grave; we being equally vain, whether we purſue Pleaſure, Honour, or Wealth: The Maſter Paſſion of the Soul is the ſame, though its Servants are often changed according to the different Stages of Life.

For this Reaſon the Apoſtle uſhers in the Words of my Text with a peculiar Emphaſis

phaſis and Force. *For I ſay, according to the Grace given unto me, to every one among you, not to think of himſelf more highly than he ought to think, but to think ſoberly.* SERM. I.

In which Words St. *Paul* adviſeth us, and inſtead of viewing ourſelves in that engaging Light, which the ſervile Flattery of others, or our own aſſuming Vanity (our greateſt Flatterer of all) might place us in, we ſhould endeavour to form a true Eſtimate of our Worth, or in the Words of the Text, *think ſoberly*.

Among the many Imputations, which we are willing to faſten upon thoſe whom we have an Averſion to, that of Pride is, I think, one of the moſt common. Now, if we would examine the innermoſt Receſſes of the Mind, I doubt we ſhould often find, that our own Pride is the Cauſe, why we tax others with it. Men elate with the Thoughts of their own Sufficiency are ever imagining, that others are wanting in their Regard to them, and therefore very apt to conclude, that Pride muſt be the Cauſe, why they with-hold from them that Reſpect, which they have an unqueſtioned Right to in their own Opinion. Of this we have a pregnant Inſtance in Scripture: *You*

SERM. I. *take too much upon you,* ſaid *Corah* and his Accomplices, when they themſelves were taking too much upon them, and invading the Province of *Aaron.* Hence it is, that their Character ſeldom eſcapes the Brand of Vanity, who have the Fortune to be poſſeſt of thoſe Accompliſhments, which would make their Detractors vain.

But before we aſperſe others with this Cenſure, let us conſider what Pride is, and correct our Miſtakes about the Nature of it.

In the following Diſcourſe I ſhall therefore I*ſt* ſtate the Notion of Pride.

II*dly*, Conſider the Unreaſonableneſs of this Vice.

I*ſt* then I am to ſtate the Notion of Pride.

Our Happineſs, as well as Knowledge, ariſes from Senſation and Reflection; and may be reduced to theſe two Articles, *viz.* that of pleaſing Senſations, and that of agreeable Thoughts. Now as to a Deſire of indulging the former without Check or Control, are owing Luſt, Drunkenneſs and Intemperance; ſo from a Deſire of indulging the latter beyond Meaſure, Pride takes it's Original. And it is very remarkable,

able, and thoſe, who moſt deny themſelves *pleaſing Senſations*, will be, except they are very much upon their Guard, apt overmuch to indulge *agreeable Reflections* upon themſelves. In Proportion as they reſiſt the coarſer Self-Indulgences, the more refined and ſpiritual Vices will gain an eaſier Entrance. Juſt as ſubtile and thin Matter finds Admittance and fills up the Vacancy, where Bodies of a groſſer Contexture cannot penetrate. Pride ſprings from a partial View of ourſelves, a View of the bright Side of ourſelves, without balancing againſt it our numerous Imperfections and Defects, how little Good we *can* perform without the Grace of God, and how little we actually *do* perform even with it. It does not conſiſt in the bare *Conſciouſneſs*, that we have ſome Accompliſhments, as for Inſtance, good Senſe, Beauty, great Abilities; but in that *Exultation* of Mind, which is conſequent upon that Conſciouſneſs, unallayed by any Self-Diſſatisfaction ariſing from a Survey of our Sins and Frailties. If our Virtues and Perfections (ſuppoſing them our own Acquiſitions) were unallayed; then an unallayed Self-Complacency *might* juſtly be the Reſult of a Knowledge of them: But as

SERM. I.

human Excellencies will have a Mixture of human Weakneſſes, our Self-Complacency ought to be moderated in proportion to our Faults and Imperfections. The Difference between Humility and Pride conſiſts in this, that the humble Man, whatever Talents he is poſſeſt of, conſiders them as ſo many Truſts repoſed in him by God, which are ſo far from raiſing his Pride, that they excite his Caution; as knowing that to *whom much is given, of him much will be required:* Whereas the Proud values himſelf, as if he were not only the *Subject* but the *Author* of thoſe good Qualities; and ſo makes an Idol of himſelf, inſtead of adoring and thanking God for them. The proud Man is dazzled with the Luſtre of his own Excellencies: Whereas the humble Man, though not inſenſible of *particular* Endowments, yet thinks meanly of Himſelf *abſolutely* and upon the *Whole*; and begs that God would *not weigh his Merits, but pardon his Offences.*

A total Self-Loathing, however, would be as great a Fault, as a clear and unmixed Self-Liking: It would deaden all the Powers of the Soul, and ſink it into a State of Inaction. There is a Medium between a

juſt

juſt Senſe of our Abilities, and an exorbi- SERM. I.
tant Opinion of them. The former is of admirable Service to Mankind, when qualified with a due Proportion of Diſcretion and Modeſty. A juſt Conſciouſneſs of thoſe Talents, with which God has entruſted us, will give Life and Spirit to our Undertakings, and be a powerful Motive to thoſe Actions, which may make us truly glorious: Modeſty and Diſcretion will be a Bar to thoſe Attempts, which being above our Sphere may make us ridiculous. Thus do theſe two act in Concert, and while the former prompts us to diſplay ourſelves; the latter prevents us from expoſing ourſelves. The *Flame* will aſpire upwards, but it will be with Trembling.

It is a falſe Humility to have low derogatory Thoughts of human *Nature* in *general*, as if it were entirely and eſſentially corrupt, without any Mixture of Goodneſs: True Humility chiefly teacheth us to have low Notions of thoſe *perſonal* Differences, which *diſtinguiſh* one Man from another. Man ought to reverence himſelf, as a Being capable of Knowledge, Virtue, and everlaſting Happineſs; but then he becomes blameable, when he is elate upon

SERM. I. the Account of *accidental* Differences; if, for Inſtance, being a Man of a large Compaſs of Thought and deep Penetration, he ſhall deſpiſe another, becauſe he is of a duller Apprehenſion or perhaps an Idiot. For it is to be conſidered, that the Soul is of the ſame Kind in both, equally great as to all eſſential Qualities in the one as in the other: and the only Superiority he has conſiſts perhaps in a finer Contexture of the Brain, or a livelier Flow of the Animal Spirits: which is plain from this; that an Accident or a Diſeaſe ſhall reduce a Man of the moſt diſtinguiſhed Senſe to the Condition of a Natural. And it would be juſt as reaſonable to deſpiſe a Man, becauſe He could not work as well as we with wretched Inſtruments; as to condemn a Man, becauſe He cannot reaſon as well with a Body incommodiouſly formed for Thinking: The Body being an Inſtrument to the Soul in Thinking. The Soul of one Man is lodged as it were in a commodious lightſom Manſion, where it can command a ſpacious Proſpect, and take in Variety of Objects; and the Soul of another may be pent up as it were in a dark Dungeon, where there are few or no Inlets of Knowledge,

But

But when this earthly Tabernacle ſhall be diſſolved, and the Mind enlarged, they will, Both of them, be upon an equal Foot. When that Knowledge which is *in Part ſhall be done away*, and that which is perfect is come; a Man of the dulleſt Apprehenſion ſhall perhaps be in a Moment wiſer, than the greateſt Scholar after a Life laid out in painful Reſearches can be here. So little Reaſon is there to lay great Streſs upon thoſe *accidental* Differences which diſtinguiſh one Man from another; at the ſame time that it is Ingratitude to God, as well as falſe Humility, to depreciate human Nature in general. SERM. I.

Pride then is, as the Text expreſſeth it, the *Thinking* too *highly of ourſelves*. It is an over-weening Conceit of our Dignity, founded upon ſome real or imaginary Superiority to our Neighbours; which, when it expreſſeth itſelf in an imperious and overbearing Carriage, and a commanding Mien, is called Haughtineſs; and is generally the Fault of a narrow Education: Whereas Men of an enlarged Converſation give into a more delicate Pride, which can never enjoy itſelf, but when it is ſo artful, as to conceal itſelf under the Maſk of Humility.

SERM. I.

The Generality of Mankind conſider only the Surface of their Actions, without ever ſounding the Depths of their Heart, and tracing the inward Workings of the Soul. Indeed we cannot but be ſenſible of the *violent* Emotions and Agitations of any Paſſion; but the *ſtiller* and gentler Movements oft eſcape our Notice. Thus when Pride becomes ſo enormous, as, in the Words of a judicious Writer *, "to make Men uſe "their Servants, as if they were Brutes, "their Inferiors as Servants, and their "Equals as Inferiors;" Men muſt be blind to overlook this Vice in others, or even in themſelves. But when it conceals itſelf under ſtudied Diſguiſes and Refinements, it will, except we are very attentive, elude our Obſervation. To give ſome Inſtances, a Perſon is perhaps very liberal; but while he does not examine the Principle of his Liberality, he ſhall not perceive that Pride is often the *Source* of it, that he only makes an Exchange of Money for Glory, and diſpenſes his Favours, becauſe he values the Vanity of Giving, more than the Thing, which he gives. Another miſtakes the Affability of the Gentleman, or

* *Hooker*'s Works, Page 520.

Man

Man of the World, for the Humility of the Chriſtian. Whereas he ought to conſider, that we oft beat down thoſe Vices which are flagrant and glaring, by others which are ſecret and out of Sight. Thus we often get the better of Intemperance not by a Virtuous Principle, but merely by a paſſionate Fondneſs for long Life, by the Fear of Death or by Avarice. Thus we often ſacrifice our outward Pride to an inward one. We keep in our Inſolence, becauſe a ſupercilious and contemptuous Treatment of others would only make us contemptible. But Affability and a Complacency of Behaviour opens us a Paſſage to the Hearts of Men, and gains us an advantageous Situation in their Minds. It may be a more artful Manner to engage that Reſpect which we ſeem to decline. Men of this Turn may be very affable, not to do Honour to others, but as they take Affability to be an Honour to themſelves. SERM. I.

It has been obſerved, I ſuppoſe, by way of Compliment to the preſent Age, that one Vice at leaſt, *viz.* that of Hypocriſy, ſeems to be baniſhed from among us: But alas! unleſs we could diveſt human Nature of its Weakneſſes, no Vice will ever be quite

SERM. I. quite extinct, though it may appear under another Form. Thus a *religious* Hypocriſy ſeems indeed in ſome meaſure to be no more: But in the room of it, there has ſtarted up a *genteel* and *polite* Hypocriſy, a certain Decency of Behaviour, which by putting on the *Appearances* of *every* Virtue, prevents the *Reality of any*. What is foul and loathſom in each Vice, Men muſt keep out of Sight, unleſs they would be public Nuſances: but then they only part with its outward Deformity, without any Amendment of the Heart. Nay ſome, I believe, confound the Ideas of Politeneſs and Morality. They miſtake the Averſion, which they have in themſelves, to whatever is *ill-bred*, *unſeemly*, and *offenſive* in any *Sin*, for a genuine *Love of Goodneſs*: They imagine that to be a *Virtue*, which is only *Vice refined*.

The more a Man knows of the World, the more ſenſible he will be, that he muſt conceal the *odious* Part of Pride, unleſs he would be odious to *himſelf*. But then he may retire into himſelf, to cheriſh each favourable and delightful Idea of his own Worth, that ſoothes and flatters his Vanity, ſhutting out all humbling and mortifying Reflections,

Reflections, that like ſo many plain-dealing Friends would put him out of Humour with himſelf, by ſuggeſting to him unwelcome, though neceſſary, Truths. And yet this is the very Eſſence of Pride. SERM. I.

For Humility conſiſts in the inward Frame and Diſpoſition of the Mind, in a right Judgment, in the main, of ourſelves: It is when we aſcribe the Glory of our Actions to God alone, who gives us Power to act; like poliſhed Veſſels, which reflect back again the Rays of Light, which they receive, inſtead of abſorbing, imbibing and detaining them. It is to have a deep Senſe that God created us out of Nothing, and that Sin reduceth us to a State worſe than Nothing without the Mercies of God, and the Merits of our Saviour.

Though there may be a Sincerity without Humility, yet a Simplicity of Manners is a neceſſary Ingredient of it. For there is a Difference between Simplicity and Sincerity; or, in other Words, a Man may be very ſincere without any Simplicity: He may not be ambitious to be thought what he is not; yet be too oſtentatious of what he is: Unable to wait till others diſcover, he is impatient to diſplay his own Perfections with all

SERM. I. all the Advantages which Art and Addreſs can give them. Whereas Simplicity is free from every Alloy of Vanity, or any Thing of a ſhewiſh Nature; it ſhines forth with natural and unſtudied Beauties, *is not puffed up, ſeeketh not its own*, the Praiſe that is due to it; and its chief Ornament is, that it does not affect any. And yet the true *Sublime* of Life, as well as of Writing, conſiſteth in the *Simple*. For noble Actions and noble Qualities, like noble Thoughts, ſupport *themſelves*, they have an inherent Greatneſs and native Luſtre, which needs not foreign Pomp and borrowed Ornaments. Nothing does them more Harm, than ſetting them off too much and over-charging them with Decorations.

To obviate Miſtakes and to remove Scruples, it will be neceſſary to obſerve that Pride is not *merely* to think favourably of ourſelves: For then indeed Pride, as ſome late Authors have maintained, would be an univerſal Vice; every Body being, more or leſs, biaſſed in his own Favour. But Pride is to think *ſo* favourably of ourſelves, as to exclude a modeſt Diffidence of ourſelves, and a ſalutary Senſe of the Number of human Frailties, the Imperfection of

our Virtues, the Malignity of our Crimes, and our Dependance on God for every Thing good *in* us and *for* us. A Man may think himſelf *ſomewhat* wiſer and better than he is; who, notwithſtanding, may have an humble or low Opinion of himſelf upon the *Whole*, as being far from thinking himſelf wiſe and good *enough*: far from *thinking that he ſtandeth* collected in himſelf, and therefore needeth not *take heed leſt he fall*. A Man may not imagine himſelf quite ſo faulty as he is; *(for who can tell how oft he offendeth?)* who yet may deſerve the Character of an humble Man; if, at the ſame time, that he endeavoureth to improve in Virtue, and get clear of every preſumptuous Sin; he ſtrives to detect, and begs of God to cleanſe him from, his ſecret and unſuſpected Faults. Pride is a Vice or moral Evil: And nothing can be Evil, any further, than it is in its genuine Tendency productive of Evil. But what evil Effects would an Opinion too favourable of ourſelves be attended with; provided it did not riſe to ſo high a Pitch, as to make us think preſumptuouſly and ſecurely of ourſelves, contemptuouſly and uncharitably of our Fellow-Creatures, and behave irreverently

SERM. I.

rently and ungratefully to our Creator? It is, I doubt, almoſt impoſſible to hold the Balance exactly even without the leaſt Inclination to our Side; it is impoſſible for us, who are Parties, to paſs Judgment on ourſelves with the ſtrict Rigour of Juſtice without the leaſt Partiality, without any favourable Softenings and Allowances: All that can be expected from us, is, what I believe every wiſe and modeſt Man doeth, *viz.* that looking around us and conſidering how apt every Man is in ſome degree to over-value himſelf, we learn from hence to entertain and cheriſh a conſtant Suſpicion and Miſgiving, that *we* do ſo too: which Miſgiving diſpoſeth us to look deeper into ourſelves, to truſt not ſo much to our own Abilities, as to our Vigilance and Circumſpection, and God's Bleſſing upon us, and to make our humble Application to him, that he would *look well, if there be any Way of Wickedneſs in us, and lead us in the Way everlaſting.*

Having thus ſtated the Nature of Pride, I proceed, II*dly*, To ſhew the Unreaſonableneſs of this Vice. And this I ſhall do, by examining our Pretenſions to Pride.

Are

Are we proud of Riches? Riches cannot alter the Nature of Things, they cannot make a Man worthy, that is worthleſs in himſelf: They may command an inſipid Complaiſance, a formal Homage, and ceremonious Profeſſions of Reſpect, and teach a ſervile World to ſpeak a Language foreign to their Hearts; but where a Largeneſs of Soul is wanting, they can never procure an affectionate Eſteem, grateful Sentiments, and an undiſſembled Love, the willing Tribute of a generous Heart to Merit only. The Value of the Eſtate may be very great; but that of the Man is not at all greater; if he does not employ his Eſtate as the great Engine to procure moral Pleaſures, and to do benevolent Offices. And if it be true Wiſdom to think that *early*, which we muſt think at laſt; let us now be convinced, which we ſhall certainly be hereafter, that there is nothing truly valuable, noble and manly, but the good Senſe to know our Duty, an hearty Inclination to practiſe it, and a determinate Steadineſs to perſevere in it to the End: That the only true ſubſtantial Greatneſs is rightly to apprehend, affectionately to worſhip, and diligently to imitate our heaven- SERM. I.

SERM. I.

ly Father. The Unthinking may be carried away with Appearances, inſtead of Realities; but the Judicious ſhould conſider Things intrinſically, and think him the greateſt, who ſtrives, as much as in him lies, to make others happy by his Benevolence, good by his Example, and wiſe by his Inſtructions.

Do we value ourſelves upon our Power? No; what is remarked by ſomebody or other, is a great Truth, *viz.* That there is no Good in Power, but merely the Power of doing Good. Upon our worldly Prudence? Thoſe, who are acquainted with Hiſtory know, how often the beſt-laid Deſigns have proved abortive. Among all the Maxims of worldly Prudence, this is one of the beſt, *viz.* That we ſhould endeavour to diſcover the reigning Paſſion in every Man, whom we would manage; and when we have found out that, we have got a Handle to turn him, which way we pleaſe. But then every Man, beſides his reigning Paſſion, has his particular Caprice or Humour; which will make our Meaſures often miſcarry. Beſides, no one Paſſion is perhaps the *perpetual Dictator:* No, our Heart is rather a little *Commonwealth*; where

where they govern us with an alternate Sway, and ſometimes our Ambition, ſometimes our Anger, ſometimes our Fear or ſome other Affection is uppermoſt. SERM. I.

Human Policy therefore muſt be uncertain, becauſe Man, who is the Subject of it, is ſo uncertain, wavering and inconſtant; and there can be no fixed and ſtated Maxims to pleaſe and manage ſo changeable and inconſiſtent a Creature: But we may by certain and unchanging Rules gain the Love of that Being, with whom *there is no Variableneſs, neither Shadow of Turning.* No Prudence therefore but the Spiritual, *viz.* to pleaſe him who is *the ſame yeſterday, to-day, and for ever,* can be certain.

Are you proud of your diſtinguiſhed Virtue? He who is proud of diſtinguiſhed *Abilities, Learning* and *Wealth,* is not the *leſs* able, learned and wealthy, *becauſe* he is *proud* of them. But he, who is *proud* of diſtinguiſhed *Virtue, ceaſeth* to be *virtuous,* by his being ſo. For the Man that is pleaſed with any Degree of Virtue, merely becauſe it is uncommon, would be ſorry, if what he values himſelf upon, as a ſingular Mark of Diſtinction, ſhould become

SERM. I. common, and all Mankind ſhould riſe to the ſame Eminence as himſelf in Morality. Now this Temper argues a Want of Benevolence, and, conſequently, of Virtue. It ſhews a mean, narrow, ſelfiſh Turn of Mind, to triumph in any extraordinary Attainment, ſolely becauſe it is peculiar to us, or confined to a ſelect Few: A truly generous, benevolent, and virtuous Spirit would wiſh, that All *were not only almoſt, but altogether ſuch as he is*; and be the happier in himſelf, if the Bulk of Mankind were Partakers of that Happineſs which reſults from Virtue.

Beſides, thoſe who *ſeldom* act or think nobly, may be *proud* of what they ſo *ſeldom* think or act. But to thoſe, who *conſtantly* entertain great Thoughts, and do noble Actions, to them they are become ſo *familiar*, that they make no great *Impreſſions* upon them. At the ſame time, that they riſe above the common Level of Action, they think they do nothing but what is common; becauſe nothing but what is commonly done by *them*. The Favours, which you cannot receive without warm Emotions of Joy and Gratitude, they can beſtow with great Coolneſs and Unconcernedneſs.

edneſs. Becauſe, though to receive ſuch Favours is ſomething unuſual to you; yet to do them is nothing new to them. SERM. I.

The more virtuous any Man is, the more modeſt and unpretending he muſt be. He muſt be ſenſible of the numerous Diſorders which lurk within, of his fickly Appetites, and the Corruption of his Heart; and how often the precarious Light of Reaſon, that *Candle* which God has lighted up in his Mind, has been *put out* by ſome ſudden *Guſt* of Paſſion. If a Child could read thoſe fooliſh, vain, wicked Imaginations, which the beſt of us have ſometimes indulged; we ſhould be aſhamed to look him in the Face, and be out of Conceit with ourſelves: And yet we do not ſometimes ſtifle them immediately; though we know that He, whoſe tremendous Majeſty fills the whole Compaſs of Heaven and Earth, cannot but be privy to them, and diſcern the ſecret Meditations of our Heart. The Knowledge of the Greateſt Beings, who *underſtandeth our Thoughts long before*, hath leſs Influence, than that of the ſilliеſt of Mortals would have, ſuppoſing he could know the inward Workings of the Soul. We are not worthy to approach

SERM. I. Him, *who dwelleth in unapproachable* Glory, but through the Merits of our Redeemer. We could not expect any Inſtances of Goodneſs from a Being leſs than infinitely good.

And yet, notwithſtanding our many Imperfections, I queſtion whether, upon a Suppoſition that all of us were to be the Judges and Rewarders of our own Merits; *this World* would be half large enough, that *every one might take a little. Several other* Worlds muſt be taken in, to recompenſe us, as we think, fully, and adjuſt the Rewards to our imaginary Deſerts.

He who thinks, that he has no Weakneſſes to ſubdue, either wholly or in part; no virtuous Habits to acquire; or, at leaſt, to improve and perfect; he, who, in ſhort, thinks himſelf quite good enough; proves, by the very Thought, that he is not ſo, then our Salvation is moſt in danger, when we diſmiſs all Apprehenſions about it.

But if Virtue (human Virtue) affords no juſt Grounds for Pride; much leſs does human *Knowledge*, which bears no Proportion to our Ignorance. The greateſt and the leaſt Objects equally baffle our Enquiries. Too great and diſproportioned an

Object

Object embarraſſes and overſets the Under- SERM. I.
ſtanding; too little an one eludes, and eſcapes it. It is God *alone*, whoſe Almighty Power, nothing is ſo *great* that it can *encumber*; whoſe infinite Wiſdom, nothing is ſo *little* that it can *eſcape*. Preſumptuous Man! wouldſt thou underſtand the Manner in which three Perſons exiſt in the ſame unbounded Eſſence? Before thou ſtriveſt to fathom the Nature of the *Greateſt* of all Beings; firſt, if thou canſt, comprehend how the leaſt of Beings exiſt, Animals a hundred Times leſs than a Mite, Myriads of ſuch Animals, as can only be diſcerned by the Help of Glaſſes. If the whole Body be ſo minute, as to be undiſcoverable by the naked Eye; how much leſs the Limbs, of which that whole Body is compounded? How much leſs ſtill the Nerves, the Veins, the Blood in thoſe Veins, the animal Spirits in that Blood; till we approach to the very Borders of Nothing? For theſe Animals contain in Miniature, all thoſe Parts which we have in larger Dimenſions. In ſhort, for one Thing that we can poſſibly account for in the Book of Nature, there are Millions of Things, of which we can give no Account:

SERM. I. Yet we, who find almoſt all Things ſo puzzling and unaccountable in the Book of Nature, expect that every Thing in the Book of Grace, which proceeds from the ſame Author, ſhould be plain and level to our Capacities.

True Knowledge is one of the ſtrongeſt Fences againſt Pride. When good Senſe and Reaſon ſpeak, they come like their great Author, God, in the *ſtill ſmall Voice*, without any empty Noiſe or Loquacity, or over-bearing Pretenſions. And thoſe who keep the beſt Senſe within, ſeldom hang out the Sign of Knowledge. Men of this Stamp will own their entire Ignorance in many Things, and their imperfect Knowledge in all the reſt. Whereas the Ignorant are ſometimes peremptory and poſitive in Matters quite above their Sphere, and, like ſome Creatures, are the *bolder* for being *blind*. In a Word, the Ingenuous will confeſs the Weakneſs of their Reaſon; and the Preſumptuous betray it by their being ſo.

If we are born without an Aptitude to learn, and a Genius for Knowledge; we may reſemble the Woman in the Goſpel, who had *ſpent all ſhe had upon Phyſicians*, and yet *grew no better, but rather worſe*. All the Tutors and

and Inſtructors in the Univerſe will avail nothing: For they *cannot open the Eyes of thoſe that are born blind.* But, granting the utmoſt Happineſs of natural Parts, yet he, who confineth himſelf to one Province of Knowledge, cannot underſtand even that thoroughly. Becauſe there is that Harmony and Alliance between the ſeveral Branches of Science, that one reflects Light upon another. He on the other hand who graſps at every Part of Knowledge, is only a ſuperficial Smatterer in all; and is too general a Trader in the Republic of Letters to become rich. A Man of a ſlow Capacity is apt to ſit down under a Deſpondency of making any Advances in Literature: Men of quick Parts are ſometimes diſtracted with Variety of Purſuits. So many Thoughts are continually riſing in their Minds, that, like Trees overladen with Fruit, they ſeldom bring any to its juſt Perfection. SERM. I.

After All, what ſignifies all the Learning in the World, without a juſt Diſcernment and Penetration? And what is the Reſult of our Penetration, but that we ſee through the Littleneſs of almoſt every Thing, and our own eſpecially? That we diſcern, and are diſguſted with, ſeveral Follies and Abſurdities which are hid

SERM. I. from Perſons of a ſlower Apprehenſion? So that our ſuperior Sagacity reſembles the pretended Second-Sightedneſs of ſome People, by which they are ſaid to ſee ſeveral uncomfortable and diſmal Objects, which eſcape the reſt of the World. This Man ranges the Circuit of the Heavens, knows the Laws by which the Planets revolve; ſees every Thing regular; then deſcends into himſelf, and finds, by ſurveying the World within, that Man alone is irregular and eccentric. He can account for the Uſes of Tempeſts, Earthquakes and Thunder; and perceives, that all Storms and Tempeſts, except thoſe in a Man's Breaſt, fulfil the Word of God and obey his Will.

Some may perhaps value themſelves upon the Strength of their Genius, the Largeneſs of their Heart, even *as the Sand upon the Sea Shore*, and the Brightneſs of their Parts. Alas! the Strength of the Paſſions, and the Quickneſs of the Appetites, generally keep Pace with the Brightneſs of the Imagination. And hence it comes to paſs, that thoſe who have, with an uncommon Compaſs of Thought, inculcated excellent Rules of Morality in their Writings, have ſometimes broke through them all in their Practice:

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The Brightneſs of their Parts enabling them to lay down fine Precepts, and the Strength of their Paſſions tempting them to tranſgreſs them. A Man may diſcourſe admirably well upon Oeconomy, who never was Maſter of it in the Conduct of Life: Becauſe he may take a Pleaſure in diſcourſing upon Oeconomy, or any other Subject, upon which he can diſplay a beautiful Fancy; but to look carefully into his Affairs, to balance his Accounts, and to proportion his Expences to his Income, is a Drudgery to which he cares not to ſtoop. There is not a greater Inlet to Vice and Miſery, than to have (which is generally the Caſe of Men of Wit, and the Cauſe of the Irregularity of their Conduct) too much Spirit to confine one's Self to the common Buſineſs of Life; and too much Fire and Paſſion to reliſh the calm Satisfactions of it. For this Temper puts a Man always in queſt of ſomething tranſporting, and every Way fitted to an high Taſte. To a Man of *ſtrong Senſations* every Delight, that is *gentle*, ſeems dull; and every Thing, but what is high ſeaſoned, flat and taſteleſs. The Conſequence of which is, that diſdaining common Bleſſings, and not able to enjoy himſelf without ſome-

SERM. I.

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SERM. I.

thing out of the uſual Road, he overleaps theſe Bounds, which confine meaner Mortals, and precipitates himſelf into an endleſs Train of Inconveniencies.

But let us ſuppoſe, what is not a very common Caſe, that a Brightneſs of Imagination, and a well-poiſed Judgment, are happily united in the ſame Perſon; yet the ableſt Writer, the brighteſt Genius, the greateſt Man that ever lived; nay, an Archangel of the higheſt Claſs may ſay, "O my God! "that I live, and that I pleaſe, if ever I "pleaſe, is owing to thee. May it be then "my uppermoſt View to do thy Pleaſure, "from whom I have the Ability to pleaſe."

How vain and uncertain all Things are here below, appears from this, that we hold even Reaſon itſelf, that ennobling Quality, that boaſted Prerogative, and diſtinguiſhing Perfection of human Nature, upon a very precarious Tenure; and ſomething, as one expreſſeth it, with a human Shape and Voice, has often ſurvived every thing human beſides. The Brain, by too great Quickneſs and Stretch of Thought, like a Chariot Wheel, by the Rapidity of its Motion, takes Fire; the thin Partitions, which divided Wit from Madneſs,

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are broken down. The moſt penetrating and ſparkling Geniuſes border upon, and ſometimes more than border upon, downright Frenzy. They ſhew us even then, in their lucid Intervals, the Monuments and Traces of what they have been, like the Monuments of old *Rome*, majeſtic even in its Ruins. Their ſudden Starts of Senſe, though ſoon broken off, give us more Pleaſure, than the ſober uniform Thoughts of Men of ſlower Apprehenſion: Juſt as the maimed Statues, the broken Pillars, and imperfect triumphal Arches of old *Rome*, delight us more, than the entire Performances of leſs able and leſs maſterly Hands. SERM. I.

If then Reaſon itſelf, which diſtinguiſheth us from Brutes, be ſo very precarious, and depends upon ſuch a fine and ſubtile Contexture of the Brain, as is liable to be diſordered by ſeveral Accidents; the Obſervation I would draw from hence is very material, and worth our Conſideration: If Mankind were to be vain of nothing, but what is their laſting Property, of which they cannot be ſtripped; they would be vain of nothing at all; there would be no ſuch thing as Vanity.

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Art thou then proud of Knowledge? Alas! the dim Light of human Reaſon looks feeble and languid at the firſt Thought and Contemplation of that *Father of Lights, in whom there is no Darkneſs* at all. Doſt thou pride thyſelf upon thy Power? All the little Grandeur we can boaſt, is loſt in the Conſideration of that *only Potentate, who dwelleth in Light*, which no one can *approach to.* Art thou elate upon the Account of an ample Fortune? Conſider him to whom the *whole World* belongs, *and all that is therein*; who wanting nothing himſelf, ſupplies the Wants of every other Being. All human Pride ſhrinks into nothing, when we contemplate that great Being, *who is All in All.* And the Man, who is poſſeſt with juſt Notions of an all-perfect God, will never make a God of any thing elſe, much leſs of himſelf.

Doſt thou value thyſelf upon popular Applauſe, and a great Name? Think how many that have made a diſtinguiſhed Figure in the World, are dead and unregarded, as if they never had been; their Deaths unlamented, their Vacancy filled up, their Perſons miſſed no more, than a Drop of Water, when taken from the whole

whole Ocean. And is it worth our while to ſtrive to pleaſe a vain fantaſtic World, which will ſoon diſregard us, and think itſelf full as well without us; inſtead of laying out our Endeavours to pleaſe that Almighty Being, whoſe inexhauſtable Power and Goodneſs will make his Servants happy to all Eternity? How ridiculous are all our Aims; except this be the grand Aim, in which all the reſt center! A Man, for Inſtance, makes it his Buſineſs to enſure to himſelf a Name after Death; that is, to ſave four or five Letters (for what is a Name beſides?) from Oblivion; and yet ſhall be neglectful of ſecuring immortal Happineſs: He ſhall be fond of an *imaginary* Life after Death; and yet make no Proviſion for that real Life, which is to laſt for ever and ever; ſolicitous to have *his Name* written and preſerved in *any Book*, but in *that* Book, where it will only be of Service to him, *the Book of Life*. O Virtue! when this ſolemn Pageantry of earthly Grandeur ſhall be no more, when all Diſtinctions, but moral and religious, ſhall vaniſh; when this Earth ſhall be diſſolved, when the Moon ſhall be no more a Light by Night, nor the Sun by Day; SERM. I.

SERM. I.

thou ſhalt ſtill ſurvive thy Votary's immortal Friend, thou ſhalt *appear*, like thy great Author, *in perfect Beauty*; thy Luſtre undiminiſhed, and thy Glory unperiſhable.

Let him therefore *that glorieth, glory in the Lord.* He alone, who gave and upholds all the Powers of Soul and Body, he alone deſerveth the Glory of them. As we are *Creatures*, the Work of *God*'s Hands, we have nothing to *glory* of: But as we are *Sinners*, and, in that reſpect, the Work of *our own* Hands, we have much to be *aſhamed* of. We then give the greateſt Proof to God of our Worthineſs, when we have a deep Senſe, and make an humble Confeſſion of our own Unworthineſs.

To God therefore, *and to Him only, be aſcribed, as is moſt due, all Might*, &c.

SERMON

SERMON II.

On the Advantages of Affliction.

Being a SERMON occaſioned by the Death of Mr. *Burton*, of *Montpelier-Row*, in *Twickenham*.

Preached in *Twickenham*-Chapel, on *Mid-lent Sunday*, 1742; and publiſhed at the Requeſt of the Audience.

PSALM LXXVII. 3.

When I am in Heavineſs, I will think upon God.

THE whole Pſalm is written with a very beautiful Spirit of Poetry; and if we conſider it merely as an human Compoſition, may juſtly challenge our higheſt Admiration. In the former Part, the Pſalmiſt vents an Heart over-charged with Grief, and writes with the deepeſt Emotions of Sorrow. *In the Day*

SERM. II.

SERM. II. *of my Trouble I ſought the Lord, my Sore ran in the Night and ceaſed not, my Soul refuſed to be comforted.* And again, at the ſeventh Verſe, *Will the Lord abſent himſelf for ever, and will he be no more favourable? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in Anger ſhut up his tender Mercies?* Thus does he diſcharge the Fulneſs of his Soul; 'till, by a very natural, and yet very ſurpriſing Tranſition, from a Rehearſal of his own Woes, he paſſes on to celebrate the marvellous Acts of God. For, to relieve himſelf under the Preſſure of his preſent Afflictions, he has Recourſe to the former Mercies, which God had vouchſafed to the *Iſraelites*. *Surely I will remember thy Wonders of old.* This uſhers in thoſe ſublime Flights of Poetry, which are peculiar to the Genius of the Eaſtern Nations. *The Waters ſaw Thee, O God; the Waters ſaw Thee; They were afraid: The Depths alſo were troubled,* &c. Then, to repreſent the Unſearchableneſs of God, he compares him, by a very beautiful Alluſion, to a Being walking upon the Waters, the Traces of whoſe Feet could not therefore be diſcovered: *Thy Way is in the Sea, and thy Paths in the great Waters, and thy Footſteps are not known.*

If we ſhould ſet aſide the Sanction of divine Authority, which ſtamps an additional Value upon the Pſalm; yet it could not fail to affect every Reader of a refined Taſte. And when we either conſider thoſe melting Strains, in which he deſcribes his own Woes; or that exalted Vein, in which he repreſents the Majeſty of God; we ſhall be at a Loſs, whether to admire more the Greatneſs of that Genius, which could acquit itſelf with ſo maſterly an Hand in both the pathetic and ſublime Way of Writing; or the Juſtneſs of that Judgment, which could with ſo dextrous an Addreſs, with ſo eaſy, and I had almoſt ſaid, ſo natural an Art, glide from the one to the other. SERM. II.

The Author of the Pſalm had a Mind deeply tinctured with Piety. When his *Heart was in Heavineſs,* he *thought upon God:* But to think on him then with Pleaſure, he muſt have ſet God conſtantly before him in the ſmooth Seaſons of Life. This will lead me to ſhew,

Iſt, The Happineſs and Reaſonableneſs of turning our Thoughts to God in general.

II*dly*, The peculiar Advantages of Affliction, to bring us to a juſt Senſe of God, and our Duty.

I*ſt*, I am to ſhew the Happineſs and Reaſonableneſs of turning our Thoughts to God in general.

To repair to God only, when under Affliction, is to uſe Him as ſome conceited Philoſophers have done, who never have Recourſe to Him, and take Him into their Schemes, but when they are in Diſtreſs, when they meet with ſome Difficulty, which they cannot poſſibly account for or get over, without calling Him in to their Aid.

Beſides, never is there more Occaſion for Good-Humour, Chearfulneſs, and an undiſturbed Serenity of Mind, than when we form our religious Notices. For, though the brighteſt Ideas of the Deity may be retained and cheriſhed under any Indiſpoſition of Mind or Body; yet, to retain and cheriſh them at that Juncture, they muſt be imprinted in indelible Characters on the Soul, when it was in an eaſy Situation: Otherwiſe, Religion will not brighten up our Minds, and *lighten the Darkneſs* of them;

them; our Minds will darken and diſcolour Religion. And what has given ſome People a Diſtaſte for it, is; that having never applied themſelves ſeriouſly to it, but when they were in a dull, joyleſs, ſullen Humour, which repreſented every Thing they were converſant about to be dull and joyleſs; the Notions of Religion, and of a joyleſs State, have been, however unduly connected, ever after inſeparable. By meditating on God only, or even chiefly, in a melancholy Hour, you will aſſociate the Idea of Gloomineſs and Horror with that of Religion: You will view Him, juſt as He was worſhipped in old Gothic Buildings, in a dim ſolemn Light, which ſheds a penſive Gloom over, and ſaddens every Object. You will not ſerve Him with that Gladneſs which he requires: For God loveth a chearful Worſhipper, as well as a *chearful Giver*. But you will repair with Reluctance and Conſtraint to that *Service*, which is *perfect Freedom*.

We are indigent Creatures, inſufficient of ourſelves for our own Happineſs, and therefore ever ſeeking it ſomewhere elſe. But where we ſhall effectually ſeek for it, is the Queſtion. Unleſs the Thoughtful

SERM. II. and the Penſive direct their Thoughts to, and caſt their Cares upon God; there will be little Difference between Them and the Gay and Unthinking, beſides this; that the Latter will have more of the *Vanity* of Life; but They themſelves more of the *Vexations* of it. If there were not another Life, our Buſineſs would be, not to alarm the Thinking Faculty, but to lay our too active and unquiet Thoughts to Reſt. The Mind would be like a froward Child, ever fretful when fully awake; and therefore to be played and lulled aſleep as faſt as we can. Our main Happineſs would be to forget our Miſery and ourſelves; to forget, that we are a Set of Beings, who, after having toil'd out the live-long Day of human Life, in Variety of Hardſhips, are, inſtead of receiving our Wages at the Cloſe of it, to ſleep out one long eternal Night in an utter Extinction of Being.

If Man had an ample Fund of Happineſs in himſelf, without any Deficiency; whence is it, that he is continually looking out abroad for foreign Amuſements; Amuſements, which are of no other Uſe, but to keep off troubleſome and ungrateful Impreſſions, and to make us inſenſible of the

the Tediouſneſs of Living; Amuſements which rather ſuſpend a Senſe of Uneaſineſs, than give us any ſubſtantial Satisfaction; and keep the Soul in an equal Poiſe between Pleaſure and Pain? And is this the great End which we have in View? Suppoſing we could compaſs it; yet if it be better not to be at all, than to be miſerable; then certainly *juſt not* to be *miſerable*, without any *poſitive* Happineſs, is much at one, as *not* to *be* at all. Whence is it, that that reſtleſs Thing the Soul, too *enterprizing* to trace every Thing elſe, yea the deep *Things* of God; is yet too *cowardly* to enquire into itſelf, and to view the Workings of that ever-loved, yet ever-avoided Object? Whence is it, that the Mind, whoſe active Energy prompts her to give a free and unconfined Range to her Thoughts on other Subjects, nay, to make, if it were poſſible, the Tour of the whole Univerſe; yet, when ſhe comes to dwell at home, and to ſurvey the little World within, flags in her Vivacity, feels herſelf in a forlorn Condition, and finds a Drowſineſs and melancholy Gloom hanging upon her? Whence is it, but that the Soul, whenever it turns its Thoughts in- SERM. II.

SERM. II.

ward, finds within a frightful Void of ſolid Happineſs, without any Poſſibility in itſelf of filling it up? Indeed, in a Circle of gay Follies, or in a Multiplicity of Purſuits, when a Succeſſion of different Objects is continually ſtriking upon the Mind, the Capacity of the Soul is taken up, and it forgets that inward Poverty and Indigence which nothing can effectually relieve but the unſearchable Riches of the Love of God: But when we ſtep aſide from the Noiſe and beaten Tracks of Life, into Solitude and Retirement; we ſoon perceive, that we are, without ſome Buſineſs to engage, or ſome Recreation to divert our Attention, an inſupportable Burthen to ourſelves. You fancy the Man, whoſe daily Labour ſerves for little elſe but to get his daily Bread, and whoſe daily Bread juſt refreſhes and ſtrengthens him to undergo his daily Labour, to be a very miſerable Object; and perhaps he is ſo. Would you make him more miſerable? Give him a Fortune, which ſhall ſet him at Reſt from his Labours, and leave him nothing at all to do: And then the Weariſomneſs, which reſulted from a continual Drudgery, will be nothing comparable to another kind of Weari-

Wearisomness far more irksome—the being weary of himself. Observe great Numbers of the Opulent and the Great: What can be *oftener* from Home than their *Persons?* Their *Thoughts*, which are *continually* from Home, ever wandering abroad, and returning unsatisfied. None is more miserable, than a Man distracted with Variety of Business; except he who has no Business, no Amusement at all. Diversions and Pastimes, properly so called, (for they answer no other End, but to pass away our Time) may have the Effect of Opiates, to beget a short Oblivion of our Cares and ourselves: But the only Cordial to invigorate our Spirits, and to give us an exquisite Relish and Enjoyment of this Life, is the well-grounded Hope of a better, through the Merits of Jesus Christ. SERM. II.

If then any one should ask, *Who will shew us any Good?* Who will point out the Way to Felicity to us? We must answer in the Psalmist's Words, *Lord, lift Thou up the Light of thy Countenance upon us.* For thou art our Happiness, who alone canst give a Stability to our moral Pleasures, and secure us from natural Evil, or support us under it. God has stiled himself *Light:*

And

SERM. II. And as the whole material Creation would be involved in one horrid and uncomfortable Gloom, if Light did not enliven it with its Smiles, and beautify it with a rich Variety of Colours; ſo would the ſpiritual Creation live in an eternal *Blackneſs of Darkneſs*, did not God lift up the Light of his Countenance upon it, brightening it with the Beams of his Truth, and chearing it with the Influences of his Favour. Earthly Objects may indeed ſwell and puff up the Mind with unſubſtantial Bliſs: But nothing can fill up every Void in the Soul, and ſatisfy the whole Compaſs of our Deſires with the Fulneſs of ſolid and unmingled Happineſs, but that ſupreme Good, that infinite Being, *who is above All, and through All, and in us All.*

Such Truths as theſe we are too apt to overlook in the Day of Proſperity; and therefore,

II*dly*, Adverſity has its peculiar Advantages, to bring us to a juſt Senſe of God, and our Duty to Him.

For, 1*ſt*, Adverſity will make us, however unwilling, reflect and deſcend into ourſelves.

When

When we enjoy one uninterrupted Flow of worldly Bliſs, when we ſail along a ſmooth and unruffled Surface with eaſy and gentle Gales; Reaſon, our Pilot which ſhould ſit vigilant at the Helm, is too often lulled into a fatal Security. But Adverſity rouſes the Mind from its Indolence, puts us upon thinking cloſely, and turning our Thoughts every Way. Thoſe, who have met with no Misfortunes to mortify that Pride of Heart, which is the Growth of Proſperity, ſay to themſelves: *Come on, let us enjoy the good Things that are preſent; let us fill ourſelves with coſtly Wine and Ointments, and let no Flower of the Spring paſs by us; let us crown ourſelves with Roſe Buds, before they be withered.* Thus the glittering Scenes of Life beget a thouſand gay Ideas, a ſwarm of fantaſtic Images, which, like Inſects, wanton and flutter in the warm Sunſhine of Proſperity; but diſappear, die, and are no more upon the firſt Inclemency of the Seaſon. SERM. II.

It is amazing, that Men, in the Fulneſs of Health and Plenty, when every Thing ſmiles around them, ſhould ſhut out the Conſideration of that Being, to whom they owe the Fulneſs of their Health and Plenty;

SERM. II.

ty; like Groves in all the Freſhneſs of their Verdure, with all their Leaves thick upon them, ſhutting out the Beams of that Sun, to which they are indebted for their chearful Verdure: Yet ſo it is. For what have the Majority of the Wealthy, the Mighty, and the Great, been doing in all Ages? Why juſt what they did in the Days of *Noah*: *They did eat, they drank; they bought, they ſold; they planted, they builded*; that is, the Diverſions and Buſineſs of this Life engroſſed their Attention; *till the Day that Noah entered into the Ark, and the Flood came and deſtroyed them all.* Juſt ſo Men do now, till Sickneſs confines them to their Bed, or ſome dire Misfortune checks their Career. Which makes *Jehoſophat*'s Example more remarkable: *When God had eſtabliſhed the Kingdom in his Hand, and he had Riches and Honour in Abundance; his Heart was lift up*, not with Pride and Inſolence, but IN THE WAYS OF THE LORD.

How thoughtleſs, how unreflecting upon their paſt Conduct were *Joſeph*'s Brethren, 'till *Joſeph*'s hard Uſage gave them a Compunction of Mind, and a deep Senſe of their former Sins? *And they ſaid one to another:*

another: We are very guilty concerning our Brother, in that we ſaw the Anguiſh of his Soul, when he beſought us, and we would not hear: Therefore is this Diſtreſs come upon us. It is the Remark of the Prophet *Amos*, that *they, who lie upon Beds of Ivory, and ſtretch themſelves upon their Couches, who chaunt to the Sound of the Viol, who invent Inſtruments of Muſic, who drink Wine in Bowls, are not grieved for the Affliction of Joſeph.*

I would by no means recommend a cenſorious, ſour Severity, which is perhaps as odious in the Sight of God, as a thoughtleſs fantaſtic Levity; and is certainly more incorrigible. For a philoſophical, ſupercilious Sullenneſs, which proceeds from *thinking* habitually in a *wrong* Channel, is a Vice ſeldom amended; becauſe Thought, which ſhould cure the Diſtemper, confirms and rivets it. But Faults ariſing from *Want* of *Thinking*, a collected Way of Thinking for ſome Time, will correct and ſet right. Now Sickneſs, Pain and Trouble, the moſt effectual and perſuaſive Teachers, will make a Man feel what he is, a poor helpleſs Creature; recollect what he has been, and look forward to what he ſhall be to all Eternity.

Little

Little do they think, who are inured to Eaſe and Delicacy, whoſe Affluence empowers them to do Good; how many Thouſands are wearing out Life in a ſad Variety of Pain; or are dying perhaps of Poverty and a broken Heart; at the ſame Inſtant that they are expending their Time and Fortune in a Round of Folly, Sin and Vanity, unconſcious of each liberal, each tender Sentiment.

But Adverſity quickens our Compaſſion, corrects that Levity, which is the Inlet to Vice; and begets a fixed Thoughtfulneſs and Sedateneſs, the Soil which Virtue loves: It takes off our Inſenſibility, breaks the Fierceneſs of our Nature, and ſoftens us into Humanity. For when our Hearts are *like melting Wax*, they are moſt ductile, tender, and ſuſceptive of humane Impreſſions. We are *acquainted with Grief*; and by feeling Miſery and Pain, we learn to have a Fellow-Feeling for the Calamities of our Fellow-Creatures.

2dly, Adverſity puts our Virtue to the Teſt, and proves the Sincerity of it.

It is *no great Virtue* for a Man to be honeſt, who poſſeſſes an ample Fortune; though it would be *a very great Crime* for him

him not to be ſo. For what Temptations can he have to Diſhoneſty, who has the Diſcretion to extract and enjoy the Sweets of a great Eſtate, without damaging or hurting the Flower from which they proceed? But *to hold faſt to that which is good*, in the loweſt Ebb of Fortune; to retain our Integrity and intrinſic Worth, when ſtripped of every Thing that we were worth beſides, and ſurrounded with whatever is grievous, is the ſtrongeſt Evidence that can be given of our Love of Goodneſs. Thouſands have acted contrary to their Conſcience, and, with a Behaviour more pitiable than their Circumſtances, *crouched* beneath the *Preſſure* of hard Fortune, to low and ſordid Compliances; who, it is to be charitably hoped, would have ſtood upright and unbending without that galling Load upon them. SERM. II.

For how ſhall a Man poſſeſs his Soul in Patience, who has little or nothing beſides to poſſeſs? Now he finds, that a little Merit, with a World of Suppleneſs, Dexterity and Addreſs, may facilitate his Advancement; but great Merit, and a rigorous, unpliant Adherence to the Rules of Morality, are too often Bars to it: That the

SERM. II. the Way from low Fortune to Greatneſs, is up a *ſteep* and *craggy* Hill: To climb up it by a *ſtraight* and *direct* Aſcent, is almoſt impracticable: To reach the Summit of it, or even to raiſe to any Eminence, he muſt generally fall into *crooked* and *indirect* Paths, which have ſeveral artful *Turns* and *Windings*.

It is eaſy for him who has a Sufficiency of Fortune, and well-regulated Paſſions, to look upon a barren Superfluity of Wealth, without caſting a wiſhful Look, or a paſſionate Side-glance towards it; to ſit looſe and *indifferent* to the World in one Senſe, *viz.* to have no ſelfiſh and indirect Views; and yet in another Senſe to be a great *Lover* of it, by affectionately wiſhing, and vigorouſly promoting, the general Good of it. The great Difficulty is, to act and think in ſome meaſure above the World, while Poverty expoſes us to the Neglect and Contempt of it; to ſcorn to build our Fortunes on the Ruins of our Probity; to deſpiſe the little Injuries we receive, and to pity the little Men that do them; little I mean in themſelves, and in the Eye of Reaſon; though they may be very great in the Eye of the World, and perhaps much greater in their own Eyes.

How

How deſpicable therefore are thoſe, who, SERM. II.
though flowing in Plenty, have loſt a good Name, merely to gain a fine Title; have ſacrificed the true Greatneſs of the Mind, for the Outſide of Greatneſs, ſome external Mark of Diſtinction; and have ceaſed to be honourable, that they may be ſtiled ſo? How truly eſteemable thoſe, who have proved their *Love* of Virtue and Truth to be *ſtronger than Death*, by foregoing the Blandiſhments of Life, and encountring the Terrors of Death for the Sake of them?

Such were the primitive Martyrs, Men of whom this World was not worthy, and therefore worthy of a better. Such was (a Name above all Names) our bleſſed Saviour, who *left us an Example* of Suffering, *that we might follow his Steps.*

Had he appeared with all the Littleneſs of Greatneſs and Power, with which the *Jews* inveſt their Meſſiah; had he aſſumed a temporal Kingdom; had he *bound Kings in Chains, and Nobles in Links of Iron*; his Example would have been of little or no Uſe; or at leaſt only to thoſe who move in an higher Orb: Not to mention, how inconſiſtent ſuch a Pattern would have been with a Religion, which teaches us to wean

SERM. II.

our Affections from earthly Things. But by ſubmitting to a lower Scene of Action, by *taking upon him the Form of a Servant*, by being content to be ennobled by himſelf, which is the trueſt Ennoblement; his Example is of more univerſal Influence. This gave him an Opportunity to exemplify ſeveral Virtues, which the Bulk of Mankind has every Day Occaſion to practiſe: Such as Humility, Patience, Reſignation to God, and Contentedneſs in the loweſt Station. *Father*, ſaith he, juſt before his Crucifixion, *if it be poſſible, remove this Cup from me; nevertheleſs, not my Will, but thine be done.* And juſt before his Death he cries out, *Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.* And again, *Father, into thy Hands I commend my Spirit.* Here are no unnatural Rants, no undiſtinguiſhing Glare of Eloquence, no high-flown Expreſſions, ſuch as the Pride of Philoſophy has dictated to its Votaries: The Thoughts are great without being extravagant; eaſy without being low and groveling. As a *Man*, he wiſhes, if it were poſſible, the Removal of his Calamities; as a *good* and *great* Man, he reſigns himſelf without Reſerve to the Will of his Creator. He affects

affects no Inſenſibility of Pain; he ſpeaks the genuine Language of human Nature, but of human Nature greatly ſtrengthened by Grace and Reaſon, which may graft upon and improve, but never deſtroy Nature.

And indeed, through the whole Tenor of our Saviour's Life, there was nothing ſhewy or oſtentatious; nothing, that was fitter to *dazzle the Eyes* of the Beholders, than to *guide their Feet in the Way of Peace.* The ſocial as well as ſolitary Virtues ſhone with gentle, yet with ſprightly Beams. Piety ſat gracefully upon him, with an eaſy Greatneſs, with a ſober Majeſty, and without any frightening and forbidding Appearances.

3*dly*, Adverſity is of Service to diſengage our Minds from earthly Purſuits, and to *fix our Thoughts, where true Joys are to be found.*

God, ſays *Solomon*, *has ſet* the Days of Adverſity *over againſt* thoſe of Proſperity, *that a Man ſhould find nothing after Him*, viz. after God to complain of, or to order for the better. The Meaning is, God hath ſo balanced and mixed Adverſity and Proſperity together; that a Man upon a Re-

SERM. II.

view of the Whole, upon a full and impartial Eſtimate of Things, ſhould have no juſt Grounds to arraign the Conduct of Providence; but ſhall find he has had more good Fortune than he deſerved, and as much as was beneficial to him; and no more ill Fortune than was neceſſary to correct his Faults, moderate his Affections, and exerciſe his Virtues.

Accordingly, we have Inſtances of thoſe, who living in a pompous Worthleſſneſs, and thinking at that Time that *to morrow would be as to day, and more abundant*, would, in all Probability, have been utterly undone for ever; if they had not been almoſt undone here by ſome ſignal Calamity. A Reverſe of Fortune has forced them upon a Courſe of Life and Train of Thinking, which they would ſcarce have fallen into of themſelves. Being obliged to retire from the great World, they have, in Proceſs of Time, regretted nothing ſo much, as that they did not retire ſooner, to think ſtrongly, apprehend clearly, and reaſon juſtly; to penetrate deeply to the Bottom of Things, and to look far to the End of them. And when the Retroſpect upon the paſt has afforded them no Comfort, they have opened

ed and brightened the Proſpect before them. SERM. II.

For Riches oft beget in us a Fondneſs for the preſent Scene of Things, and a Deadneſs of Affection to God and heavenly Things. But Afflictions ſet the Soul free, and leave it diſencumbered in the Purſuit of Heaven. Convinced by melancholy Proof of the Inſufficiency of worldly Things, we take Sanctuary in the Fulneſs of the divine Sufficiency. Finding ourſelves diſconſolate in *a barren and dry Land, where no Water is*; we deſire thoſe *Rivers of Pleaſure*, which *flow at God's Right Hand for evermore.*

Prayer is a natural Motion of the Soul to God in any deep Diſtreſs; it becomes then our neceſſary Refuge, even though it might not be our free Choice before: which proves, that Religion, however it may be ſtifled in Proſperity, is interwoven in our Frame. A Man greatly aggrieved by oppreſſive Power, without a Proſpect of having his Grievances redreſſed below, cannot but make his humble, ſilent Appeal to the Great God of Heaven, as to the laſt Reſort of Juſtice, *who helpeth them to Right, that ſuffer* wrong. We cannot help look-

SERM. II.

ing up to that Being, *the Father of Mercies, and the God of Comforts, from whom our Help cometh*; when we ſee ourſelves abandoned and forlorn, when we look around us, but there is none to ſave us from imminent Ruin.

Then, whatever inborn Vigour of Mind we may have; we fly to God and beg an additional Strength from him to ſupport us under our Calamities, Grace to turn them to our Advantage, and eternal Happineſs to reward them. Then we chiefly value this Life, as it has a Connexion with a future; a Life in which we ſhould be unwilling, were the Choice given us, to tread the ſame Round over, and to meaſure Time back again; and yet Man goes on, ſtill deceived by paſt Pleaſures, ſtill depending on thoſe to come; till his Days are run out to the very Dregs: Whereas the obvious Thought is: If ſo little Satisfaction is to be had, and ſo much Pain to be undergone in the Greenneſs and Verdure of Youth, *what ſhall be done in the dry Tree?*

To a Man *at Eaſe in his Poſſeſſions*, the Dread of Diſſolution, which ſometimes poiſons all his Enjoyments, ſhall be often a greater and more painful Ill, than his Diſſolution,

lution, conſidered in itſelf, and the *Shadow of Death* ſhall be more formidably large than the Reality: But a good Man in Diſtreſs could wiſh, if it were conſiſtent with the Will of his Creator, *to be diſſolved, and to be with Chriſt:* He wants to *render unto God, what is God's*, viz. his Soul, which bears that Image and Impreſs of the Deity, which it has been his Buſineſs to preſerve bright and unſullied: He thinks it would not be worth his while to live a Moment here, if he were not to live for ever hereafter. SERM. II.

I have been led into this Train of Reflections by the Death of a Perſon, whom we all know, and to whom I have particular Obligations. The Loſs of even an inoffenſive Perſon, with whom we conſtantly travelled together in the common Road of Life, without any other Circumſtance to endear his Memory, cannot but in ſome meaſure affect an humane Heart. Every Place where he generally was, ſuggeſts the Idea of him: We miſs him there, and ſcarce at firſt recollect, that he is now no more; but as ſoon as we do, that very Recollection brings a melancholy Thought acroſs the Mind; till, by degrees, the Im-

SERM. II.

preſſion wears off, and the Idea of him is disjoined from that of the *Place*, which muſt *know him no more*. How much more then ought ſome of us here to be affected, who have lately been deprived of a very worthy and eſteemable Acquaintance, right in his Principles, regular in his Practice, and eaſy and affable in his Converſation?

Frank, open and ingenuous by Nature, cautious and prudent by his Knowledge of the World, ever ready to oblige; he lived without a formed Deſign of diſpleaſing any body, and yet without the vain chimerical Hopes of pleaſing every body.

He was a very proper Perſon to have Recourſe to upon any intricate Emergency. For he at once preſerved the cool Judgment of a diſintereſted Perſon, and yet entered as heartily and thoroughly into the Affair, as if he had been perſonally intereſted in it; fruitful of Expedients, with the good Senſe to fix upon that which was beſt, and moſt to the Purpoſe.

He had ſo eſtabliſhed a Character for Punctuality, Fairneſs and Honeſty, in his Buſineſs, that People loved to have to do with a Man of his unſuſpected Veracity; above thoſe indirect Arts, which a *great* Soul

Soul *deſpiſes*, and a *good* one *deteſts*; the little temporary Expedients of Men, who want to ſerve a preſent Exigency, and procure ſome ſhort-lived Advantages; but have not Senſe enough to conſider the *remote Conſequences* of an Action, and to think of the Prophet's Queſtion, *What will ye do in the End thereof?* For certain it is, that Knavery cannot long be concealed, nor Honeſty counterfeited: and *the Lip of Truth is eſtabliſhed for ever, but a lying Tongue is but for a Moment.* There was a Dignity in his Aſpect, Weight in his Words, and an Openneſs and Simplicity in his Actions, which engaged Men's Eſteem for him, and made them repoſe a firm Confidence in him. It ſeemed to be his Opinion, that in complicated Caſes our ſecond Thoughts were better than our firſt; and that we ought to deliberate long, before we proceed to Action: But that in plain Caſes our firſt Sentiments, the Sentiments of genuine, untainted Nature, were better than our ſecond; and that to deliberate, was only to endeavour to find out ſome ſpecious Refinements and artful Gloſſes, by which we might, with much ado, reconcile thoſe Practices to our Conſcience, to which it was

SERM. II.

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SERM. II.

at firſt View ſtrongly abhorrent. He never therefore deviated from the plain High-Road of Honeſty into thoſe crooked and intricate By-Paths, in which, where one has ſhortened his Way to Riches, hundreds have loſt and bewildered themſelves.

That he was an affectionate Huſband to one of the beſt and tendereſt of Wives, and a kind indulgent Maſter to his Servants, are confeſſed Parts of his Character; and yet theſe are the ſureſt Teſts of an habitual Good-Nature, and a prevailing Sweetneſs of Diſpoſition.

Being bred a Scholar, he had a Capacity and Knowledge, but not a Mind and Spirit, above his Profeſſion: For he as diligently applied himſelf to it, as if he had been by Nature and Education only fitted for that Sphere. Before his Retirement from Buſineſs and the World, he had an enlarged Converſation in it: But though he often kept Company with Men of looſe Principles, he never departed from his own, which he had early imbibed, and thoroughly digeſted. For Men of this Stamp ſeldom make any laſting Impreſſions upon Perſons of *ſtrong Senſe*, and a thoroughly-*good* Diſpoſition: The utmoſt they can do

is

is to ſtagger *weak* Men, and to make thoſe that are already in ſome degree *bad*, much worſe. He was a conſtant Frequenter of the Church, during his Health; and, when his Illneſs confined him to his Houſe, a conſtant Communicant at the three great Seaſons, and received the Sacrament with that awful Compoſure of Behaviour, which beſpoke a Mind recollected and attentive, and affected all about him with a correſpondent Seriouſneſs.

His Faults and Frailties were ſuch as *all* Men are liable to: But his Perfections were the Attainments of *few* in Compariſon; particularly the great Patience with which he bore the ſevere Trials which God laid upon him. He ſeemed to enjoy himſelf and his Friends under ſuch afflictive Circumſtances, as would have made moſt others a Burthen to themſelves, and uneaſy to every one that came near them; and was a ſignal Example that the *greateſt* Advantage one Man can have above another in this Life, ariſes from the *Temper* and Diſpoſition of the *Mind*; that Temper, which ſoftens every Care, and improves every Bleſſing. For he ſeemed to have had more true Peace of Mind under a laſting Compli-

Serm. II. Complication of Diſtempers, than others are poſſeſt of in the Fulneſs of Health and Vigour; who want they know not what, and are uneaſy they know not why: And if at any Time his Spirits were depreſt by long-continued Pain, Converſation with an intimate Friend would break the Gloom that hung upon him, and brighten up his Soul. Indeed his Malady grew upon him to that degree, that it was almoſt cruel to wiſh him a longer Continuance among us: All that his Friends could deſire, was an eaſy Paſſage out of this World into a better, where *there is no Pain or Sorrow.* His Soul is now enlarged from that corruptible Body to which it was united; and releaſed from thoſe Miſeries, which, by virtue of that Union, it underwent. How ſoon we, who *in the Midſt of Life are in Death,* may follow him, God only knows: Each Day brings us nearer to *Eternity*; and it ſhould be our main Endeavour, that each may bring us nearer to a *bleſſed* Eternity.

But, while we are in the Body, we muſt more or leſs ſtruggle with Difficulties, and combat with Temptations. While we live, we muſt perſevere, without ſlackening our Induſtry, *to fight this good Fight:* When

we die, we have gained the deciſive *Victory:* and when we come before the Throne of Grace, we ſhall receive a glorious *Triumph*; a Triumph indeed, where inſtead of the ſenſeleſs Noiſe of an undiſtinguiſhed and undiſtinguiſhing Populace, a numerous Choir of ennobled Spirits ſhall hail with joyful Acclamations their happy Fellow-Servant: While, to crown all, the great Judge pronounces the bleſſed Sentence: *Well done, thou good and faithful Servant! Enter thou into the Joy of thy Lord.* SERM. II.

SERMON

SERMON III.

On Faith, Benevolence, &c.

Being a Farewel SERMON preached in *Twickenham*-Chapel, *June* 20, 1742; and publiſhed at the Requeſt of the Audience.

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1 TIMOTHY I. 19.

Holding Faith, and a good Conſcience.

SERM. III.

THIS being the laſt Time, that I ſhall ſpeak to you in the Capacity, which I now bear, of your Preacher and Miniſter; I have choſen theſe Words, the Advice of St. *Paul* to *Timothy*, as containing the Sum and Subſtance of our Duty. In diſcourſing upon which, I ſhall throw together ſome few Thoughts;

I*ſt*, Upon Faith;
II*dly*, Upon a good Conſcience;

III*dly*,

III*dly*, Take my Leave of you, with a ſhort Addreſs to you.

I. The firſt Point is, that you would ſeriouſly conſider the ſtrong Evidences of your Faith; Evidences ſo ſtrong, that he would be deemed a Madman, who was not determined by much leſs in his ſecular Affairs. If any one ſhould go about to diſprove the Conqueſts of *Alexander*, he would be thought not to be in his ſound Mind: And yet there are mueh ſtronger Proofs for the Reality of the Miracles recorded in Scripture, and particularly in the New Teſtament; than there are for the Victories of *Alexander*, or even for the Being of ſuch a Man.

Let it no more ſtagger your Faith, that there are ſo great a Number of *Unbelievers*; than it ought to influence your Practice, that there are ſo great a Number of wicked Men. Beſides, you may be deceived, by miſtaking *ſecond* Qualities for *firſt*. A Propenſity to think out of the common Road, may be by no Means the *leading* Quality among thoſe that are ſtiled Unbelievers: It may be only a *ſecondary* one, and ſubſervient to a *primary Deſire*; that of being in the Faſhion. Thoſe very Men, who now affect

affect to be thought Unbelievers, might, probably, if they had lived in the Times of the Grand Rebellion, have ſet up for Saints: Becauſe a reputed Sanctity was as much the Mode of that Age, as Infidelity is of this. There is a Torrent of Opinions peculiar to almoſt every Age: Men of light unbalanced Minds, like light Matter, are borne down by the Current; and Men of ſolid Senſe do not always meet with the Succeſs which they deſerve, in ſtemming and oppoſing it. The Principles of Chriſtianity may be out of Faſhion: But what they want in the Faſhion, they make up in Weight, Solidity, and intrinſic Worth. SERM. III.

For one, that has been made a Proſelyte to Deiſm, by Reading, Thinking and Studying, there are Multitudes, who become ſo by Converſation with thoſe, who have no Way of keeping themſelves in Countenance, but by diſcountenancing Religion. And what wonder is it, that Perſons ſhould be *laughed out* of Religion, who never *reaſoned* themſelves *into* it? A Man in his younger Years muſt be well-diſpoſed, and of a ſerious thinking Turn, to converſe at large, and yet continue a Chriſtian: But if he be of a ſerious Turn, and impartially

SERM. III.

weigh the numerous Proofs for it, he cannot but continue a Chriſtian. For Chriſtianity has too many and ſtrong Appearances of Truth, for any, who deliberately and unbiaſſedly attends to them, to believe it an Impoſture. It has been *ſifted as Wheat*: And the Conſequcnce is, that ſome few trifling Conſiderations, which had been formerly alledged in favour of it, have been ſet aſide, *like the Chaff, which the Wind ſcattereth away from the Face of the Earth*; but its ſolid and ſubſtantial Arguments, like the *good Seed*, fall not to the Ground, but remain firm, without any debaſing Mixtures.

To reject Chriſtianity, becauſe of the Difficulties with which its Doctrines are attended; it is to reject it as *falſe* for that, which ſeems to be an Argument of its *Truth*. I will explain myſelf immediately. Chriſtianity, ſuppoſing its Truth, is a Revelation from God——A Revelation from God muſt contain ſomething of the Nature, Will and Counſels of God, as far as they relate to us.—Now, the Will, Counſels and Nature of an infinite Being, muſt be, in a great meaſure, unſearchable to, and incomprehenſible by, Beings of ſuch a ſcanty Pittance of Underſtanding, as we

have. — That is, they muſt be incumbered with inſuperable Difficulties. — To object Difficulties then againſt Chriſtianity, is to make that an Argument againſt the Truth of Chriſtianity; which Chriſtianity, *ſuppoſing its Truth*, muſt, in the Nature of the Thing, be attended with. The united Force of Unbelievers has never been able to invalidate the ſeveral Arguments that have been brought to prove the Truth of Revelation; and while theſe prove it to be true, Difficulties cannot alter the Nature of Things; they cannot make that to be falſe, for the Truth of which we have forcible Proofs.

Liſten not therefore to the Suggeſtions of deſigning Men. Under a Pretence of baniſhing your Apprehenſions of a future Judgment, they will only daſh your Hopes, and weaken your Expectations of a bleſſed Immortality; alarming thoſe very Apprehenſions, which they promiſed to remove, by adding to your other Terrors, this *new* Fear, which will continually haunt you; a Fear, leſt you have ſinned in diſmiſſing your firſt Perſuaſion for very ſlight and frivolous Reaſons. There may be ſeveral, who have juſt Senſe enough to ſee there

SERM. III.

are *Difficulties* in Chriſtianity; but not Senſe enough to ſee they are *but* Difficulties: And theſe may be confirmed Infidels, *mere Reeds ſhaken with the Wind*, with every Blaſt of vain Doctrine. But where there are no inſuperable Prejudices of Education in the Caſe; take it for granted, that Men of cool Heads, who dare think home, who dare follow Truth with the ſame Indifference, as a Traveller enquires after the beſt Road that leads to his Journey's End, do not think ſo differently in material Points as you may imagine. They may hang out falſe Colours; but, depend upon it, the utmoſt Length Men are capable of going, who are thoroughly willing and able to drive each Argument to an Head, is to have ſome Doubts and Scruples, which are preponderated by an exceeding Weight of Evidence on the other Side. Abſolute infallible Certainty is in Heaven, and we are upon Earth; but there is ſuch a Degree of moral Certainty, as is ſufficient to overbalance all Doubts. We know every Objection againſt Chriſtianity as well as they do; and there is not the leaſt Shadow of a Demonſtration againſt it: But the Reaſons for it are ſo ſtrong, that though they do

not

not amount to a ſtrict Demonſtration, they make near Approaches to it. SERM. III.

I know the Firmneſs of our Aſſent does not depend ſo much on *outward Evidences*, be they never ſo forcible, as on the *inward Frame* and Bent of the Mind. Yet I take it to be almoſt as impoſſible for a Man, ſuppoſing his Faculties to be good, and duly exerciſed, to be deceived *intirely* in a Point of Moment; as it is for him, when under the Influence of ſome criminal Paſſion, not to deceive himſelf in *Part*. The Caſe is the ſame in relation to very material Errors, as it is in regard to ſecret Vices. The latter may eſcape our Obſervation, as to any particular, diſtinct, explicit Knowledge of them: However, we have general, confuſed, indiſtinct Notices, that all is not right within, as to the Article of Sins in ſome meaſure unſuſpected; and this is the Reaſon, why we are averſe to ſearch out our Spirits; leſt we ſhould find that to be too true, upon a mature Examination, which we miſtruſted upon a careleſs, tranſient Glance of Thought. Juſt ſo it is in Matters of Belief. Where there is a moral Certainty, any wrong Affection may ſo far blind even a Thinking Man, that he ſhall not have a *thorough* and

SERM. III.

determined Conviction of the Truth; but he cannot ſhut out or ſuppreſs the Evidences for it ſo entirely, as not to have a *general Diſtruſt*, and an *implicit Suſpicion*, that he is in the Wrong: Which general Diſtruſt is the Cauſe that he is ſo unwilling to look into a Book, which is written with great Strength of Reaſon on the other Side, leſt he ſhould let in the Enemy Truth to diſturb his Repoſe.

There may be, however, ſome Exceptions to what is here laid down. Men may have ſomething particular in their Temper: There is ſometimes an unſuſpected Wrongneſs of Underſtanding, which, becauſe it does not diſcharge itſelf in Raving, eſcapes the Eye of common Obſervers; but yet ſhall leaven a Man's whole Way of Thinking: And it generally falls in with the reigning Bent of the Times. When the Nation was in a Ferment about Religion, and for, what was called, a greater Purity in it, it ſtruck in with the general Vogue of the Age, and vented itſelf in all the Extravagancies of Fanaticiſm: But now, when Things have taken a different Turn, and Irreligion is the prevailing Mode; it has received a new Determination from thence.

Hence

Hence ſome are as diſtempered Bigots for their No-Religion; or what makes near Approaches to none; as others were about a Century ago for a farther Reformation. Some Perſons who have travelled early into Countries, where Popery is eſtabliſhed, have had Senſe enough, in their younger Years, to ſee through the groſs Impoſitions and Cheats, which are practiſed upon the Vulgar. But not being able to ſeparate Religion itſelf from the undue Mixtures which were blended with it, they have unhappily contracted an Averſion for all Religion in general. They have aſſociated with the Idea of Religion all thoſe numerous Tricks and Fopperies, which have paſſed there under its ſacred Cover. And the Caſe of thoſe, who by this Means, or by any other Means ſimilar to this, have conceived an early Diſtaſte for Religion, reſembles theirs, who have contracted an Antipathy to ſome Meats or Liquors, however wholeſome and nouriſhing, by reaſon of ſome bitter and unpalatable Draughts or Ingredients being mixed with them: The diſagreeable Idea always recurs, when they ſee them. This is certain, that offenſive Impreſſions, which have been given us of Religion, Learning,

SERM. III.

or any thing elſe in our tender Years, before our Minds come to a Steadineſs and Conſiſtency; are like thoſe Marks which are made upon the Body of an Animal in its Mother's Womb; they are ſeldom or never eraſed, but we carry them with us to the Grave.

But whatever Allowances we may make for inſuperable Prejudices, and invincible Ignorance, in this Caſe, and many others, it is a Miſtake to think, that Deiſts are leſs eaſy of Belief, than the reſt of Mankind. There may be a certain Stock of Faith, which we bring with us into the World; and as it has been obſerved of the *Affections*, that if they be with-held from their *natural* Gratifications, they will often diſcharge themſelves on *improper* Objects: Juſt ſo, if Men do not place their *Faith* on *ſuitable* Objects, they will not ceaſe to be Believers; they will *miſplace* it on *unſuitable* ones; and whatever they want in a true Chriſtian Faith, they will more than make up in believing ſtrange Abſurdities; of which numerous Inſtances might be given both in the paſt and preſent Times.

You may have bad Books induſtriouſly thrown in your Way; and you may have an

an Imagination *apt to ſtartle* at Difficulties new to you. But if you have a Turn for ſolid Thinking and Reaſoning, *bring* your Mind *cloſe* to the Difficulty, and make it take a *near* View of it on every Side; and you will find that what *ſtartled* it at a Diſtance, was only ſome idle *Trifle*, which Fancy had *dreſſed* up in a *formidable* Shape. And if you have not, deſire thoſe, who have ſtudied the Point, to turn to ſuch Paſſages in Books already publiſhed as contain a ſufficient Anſwer to it. For Infidelity can only go *round* and *round* the ſame Topics, in an eternal Circle, without advancing one Step further: It produces no *new* Forces; it only brings thoſe again into the Field, which have been ſo often *baffled*, *maimed* and *diſabled*, that, in Pity to them, they ought to be diſmiſſed, and diſcharged from any further Service. SERM. III.

You may complain that you have not Capacities ſufficient for ſuch Things. Suppoſing your Abilities ſo very ſlender, that you cannot perceive the Truth of an hiſtorical Fact well atteſted; yet one Thing you may be ſure of; that it is much better for the Good of the whole, that Mankind ſhould abide by ſuch a written Rule of Faith

SERM. III. Faith and Practice, as the Chriſtian is; than that they ſhould be left every one, in low as well as high Life, to collect a Religion for themſelves, juſt as their Ignorance, Paſſions and Prejudices ſhould miſlead them. You may ſee, that this Scheme, which is that of Infidelity, would be deſtructive of the general Happineſs of the World: And you may conclude, that whatever Scheme would, at the Foot of the Account, leave the World in a much worſe State, than it was before, in Point of Happineſs, muſt be diſagreeable to his Will, who wiſhes the Happineſs of the World; and therefore contrary to Truth. What better Wiſh could the beſt-natured Being form for the Benefit of the World; than that the Doctrines of Chriſtianity, thoſe ſtrong Incentives to Virtue, ſhould be univerſally believed; and its Precepts univerſally practiſed?

II*dly*, From a right Faith I now proceed to what is, or ought to be, the Conſequence of it, a good Life.

A good Life is not one ſolitary and ſingle Virtue, however glaring; it is the Combination and Meeting together of all the moral and ſpiritual Graces: Juſt as Light and

and Whiteneſs is not one ſingle Colour and Ray; it is the Compoſition of all the Colours and Rays united and blended together. SERM. III.

Your firſt and leading Duty is Piety to God. And this takes in all religious Duties, whether moral or poſitive; whether we fully and clearly ſee the Reaſons of them, or we ſee them dimly and indiſtinctly, or we do not ſee them at all; knowing this (enough for *us* to know) that an all-wiſe Being can enjoin no Duty, but for wiſe Ends and Purpoſes; and an all-good Being can command no Performance, but what is for our Good and Benefit.

Let not your Piety break out in ſudden ſhort interrupted Flaſhes, but let it ſhine on in one continued ſteady Day-light. Have not juſt Religion enough to make you uneaſy; but enough to give you ſolid Satisfaction, and a well-grounded Aſſurance. Give God *all* you can: give him your Heart---for *that* is *all*. And then, inſtead of contenting yourſelf with thinking, how holy and charitable you would be, if you had ſuch a Fortune, or were in ſuch a Station; you will never be eaſy, till you are as holy and charitable as it is poſſible for you to be, in whatever Station you are, or whatever Fortune you have.

But

SERM. III.

But I have already discoursed often on this Subject: One Thing more however I beg leave to mention. You are, most of you, regular Attendants on the Service of the Church: Take care, that your Deportment out of Church, be correspondent to your Behaviour in it: Otherwise, you will do Religion more Disservice, than if you were its open and avowed Enemies. For, pray observe: Though Piety be the most valuable Thing in itself, the Bulk of Mankind are not capable of forming fine *abstract* Ideas of it in *itself*; they must consider it, if at all, as it *lies before* them in the *Lives* and *Conversation* of *Men reputedly pious*. And when they see those who have that Character, laying Stress upon Trifles, as if the whole of Religion consisted in them, and neglecting Essentials; when they see them prying into the Secrets of Families, or encouraging and listening to those that do so, addicted to Censoriousness and Superciliousness; the little low despicable Notions, which they form of Persons professing Piety, they will unjustly annex to Piety itself, and hold it ever after cheap and contemptible.

2*dly*,

2*dly*, Let therefore your Piety to God be joined with, what ought to be inſeparable from it, Charity to Man.

By Charity, I do not mean only Almſgiving; for that is only one Branch of it, one outward Expreſſion of this Duty; I mean the moſt liberal Sentiments and the moſt enlarged Affections towards all Mankind. A charitable Man will endeavour to ſee every Thing through the Mirror of Good-Nature, which mends and beautifies all Objects, without altering any: Like fine Painting, which, without deviating from Nature, adds new Touches and Graces to it; it does not change, but only embelliſh it; it does not give a mere Likeneſs, much leſs a woful Likeneſs, it gives an agreeable and advantageous one. Far from *ſurmiſing* Evil, where there is *none*; he will rather *think no Evil*, where there really *is*; judging it better to err through a good-natured Credulity, than through an undiſtinguiſhing Suſpicion; becauſe a good-natured Credulity will only expoſe him to ſome temporal Inconveniencies; but an undiſtinguiſhing Suſpicion will beget in him a ſettled Uneaſineſs, Jealouſy, Hatred, and the whole Train of black Paſſions, which will

SERM. III.

will render his Soul as dark as that Hell, into which they will at laſt irrecoverably ſink him.

To deſcend to Particulars; *1ſt*, A charitable Man will never hate any Body or Community of Men, provided there be nothing immoral in their Profeſſion; however he may diſlike ſome Individuals in it. Nothing is more unjuſt, though I am afraid, nothing is more unuſual; than, if we have had to do with ſome wicked Men of any Fraternity, to cry out, *they are all become abominable.* Now an undiſtinguiſhing Cenſure upon a whole Profeſſion, for the Faults of ſome few particular Members, is generally a greater Crime, than any we can fix upon thoſe few particular Members. Becauſe it tends to bring an undeſerved Diſcredit upon a whole Body of Men, and thereby to leſſen their Uſefulneſs. To commend a whole Body in the groſs, is an Indication of a weak, undiſtinguiſhing Judgement; and to condemn it in the groſs, of Uncharitableneſs: Human Nature was never ſo good, but there were ſeveral worthleſs Members of every Profeſſion; and never ſo bad, but there were ſeveral of diſtinguiſhed Worth in every Condition of Life.

Life. The Scholar deſpiſes the Man of Buſineſs, and the Man of Buſineſs the Scholar: Now, what eſtranges Men from each other, ſhould, in the Reaſon of the Thing, mutually endear them: Becauſe the general Good of the whole ariſes from the different Purſuits of the ſeveral Individuals: And if all Men were to go the ſame Way, and follow the ſame Track of Employment; it would cauſe a ſtrange Embarraſſment: The Road would be ſo much crouded, that none could get forward. *Honour* then *all Men*, even thoſe of the meaneſt Occupations: Take in, with a comprehenſive View, the whole Chain of the rational World, where, though the Links may be diſproportioned in their Size, yet the leaſt ſerves to ſtrengthen and ſupport the greateſt, and both, by depending upon, and aiding each other, keep the whole Contexture from falling aſunder. SERM. III.

2*dly*, As you ought not to conceive a Diſtaſte for any Man, or Body of Men, upon the Account of a different Profeſſion; ſo neither ſhould you, becauſe they are of a different Perſuaſion, Sect, or Party.

Suppoſing yourſelf in the right; you pity *corporeal* Blindneſs: why ſhould you not

SERM. III.

not likewiſe compaſſionate, inſtead of being angry with, the Blindneſs of the *Underſtanding*, when it cannot diſcern certain religious Truths? I know no Reaſon but this, which reſolves itſelf into Pride; that the *corporeally* blind *own* themſelves to *be ſo*; but the blind in *Underſtanding* maintain, that *we* labour under that *Diſtemper*, and not *they*. Now we are not ſo thoroughly convinced, that our Underſtanding and Way of Thinking is perfectly right in all Points, as that we have the full Enjoyment of our Eye-ſight: And this makes us ſo angry with the one, while we pity the other. Enſure your own Salvation as much as you can, but do not think hardly of thoſe, who differ from you even in fundamental Points, much leſs conſign them over to Damnation. Our bleſſed Saviour, who diſapproved the Worſhip of the *Samaritans*, as appears from his Converſation with the *Samaritan* Woman at the Well, yet ſingles out, in his beautiful Parable, one of that Nation to do a generous Action to the wounded Traveller, on purpoſe, one would think, to obviate this contracted Turn of Mind, and to recommend thoſe to our Love, whoſe religious Notions we diſlike.

diſlike. Whether a good Man, who is a Miſbeliever in ſome Points, without any Faultineſs or Irregularity of Will, will be damned for his *erroneous* Way of Thinking, may be a Queſtion among ſome People; but I think it admits of none, that a Man will be damned for an *uncharitable* Way of Thinking and Acting. SERM. III.

3*dly*, You muſt not paſs a hard precipitate Cenſure upon a whole Nation or Country. *Can any Thing good come out of Nazareth?* was a low, confined, ungenerous Thought: Goodneſs is not *limited to*, or *excluded from*, any Place: The Good are *diffuſed* throughout all Nations, all Sects, all Perſuaſions, all Ranks and Orders of Men. True Charity ever dwells with a Largeneſs of Soul, which takes in all Mankind, ſincerely wiſhing, that all, who are in any material Error, may embrace the Truth; and all, that embrace it, may hold a pure Faith in a pure Conſcience. And I queſtion whether a generous-ſpirited Way of Thinking, a noble and exalted Ardor of Soul, with ſtrong Paſſions, which ſometimes tranſport a Man into Exorbitances, be not, upon the whole, much more commendable; than an inſipid Regularity, and

SERM. III.

a flat Correctneſs of Life, which creeps on in one dull Tenor, without ever overflowing: with too little Spirit to reach any Heights in Virtue; too languid Paſſions to be guilty of any flagrant Vice: Juſt as the Critics have preferred the Sublime in Writing, with a great many Inaccuracies and Inequalities, to a middling Stile, though very faultleſs.

In ſhort, true Charity is to deteſt nothing but Vice; and to deſpiſe nothing but contracted, illiberal Notions, which would confine God's Favour, and moſt certainly limit our Affections within a narrow Circle. Form as amiable Sentiments as you can, of Nations, Communities of Men, and Individuals. If they are true, you do them only Juſtice; if falſe, though your Opinion does not alter their Nature, and make *them* lovely; *you yourſelf* are more lovely, for entertaining ſuch Sentiments. When you *feel* the bright Warmth of a Temper thoroughly *good* in your own *Breaſt*, you will *ſee* ſomething *good* in *every* one about you. It is a Mark of a Littleneſs of Spirit, to confine yourſelf to ſome minute Part of a Man's Character; a Man of generous, open, extended Views, will graſp the Whole of it; without which he cannot

paſs

paſs a right Judgment on any Part. He will not arraign a Man's general Conduct for two or three particular Actions; as knowing, that Man is a changeable Creature, and will not ceaſe to be ſo; till he is united to that Being, who is *the ſame yeſterday, to-day, and for ever.* He ſtrives to outdo his *Friends in* good Offices, and overcome his *Enemies by* them. He thinks he then *receives* the greateſt *Injury,* when he *returns* and *revenges* one: For then he is *overcome of Evil.* Is the Perſon young who has injured him? He will reflect, that Inexperience of the World, and a Warmth of Conſtitution, may betray his unpractiſed Years into ſeveral Inadvertencies, which a more advanced Age, his own good Senſe, and the Advice of a judicious Friend, will correct and rectify. Is he old? the Infirmities of Age, and Want of Health, may have ſet an Edge upon his Spirits, and made him *ſpeak unadviſedly with his Lips.* Is he weak and ignorant? he conſiders, that it is a Duty incumbent upon the wiſe to bear with thoſe that are not ſo. *Ye ſuffer Fools gladly,* ſays St. *Paul, ſeeing ye yourſelves are wiſe.* In ſhort, he judges of himſelf, as far as he can, with the ſtrict Rigour of

Juſtice; but of others, with all the Softenings of Humanity.

From charitable and benevolent Thoughts, the Tranſition is unavoidable to charitable Actions. For wherever there is an inexhauſtible Fund of Goodneſs at the Heart, it will, under all the Diſadvantages of Circumſtances, exert itſelf in Acts of ſubſtantial Kindneſs. He, that is ſubſtantially good will be doing good. The Man, that has a hearty determinate Will to be charitable, will ſeldom put Men off with the mere Will for the Deed. For a ſincere Deſire to do Good, implies ſome Uneaſineſs, till the Thing be done: And Uneaſineſs ſets the Mind at work, and puts it upon the Stretch to find out a thouſand Ways and Means of obliging, which will ever eſcape the Unconcerned, the Indifferent, and the Unfeeling.

The moſt proper Objects of your Bounty are the Neceſſitous. Give the ſame Sum of Money, which you beſtow on a Perſon in tolerable Circumſtances, to one in extreme Poverty; and obſerve, what a wide Diſproportion of Happineſs is produced. In the latter Caſe, it is like giving a Cordial to a fainting Perſon; in the former, it is like giving

giving Wine to him, who has already quenched his Thirſt. *Mercy is ſeaſonable in Time of Affliction, like Clouds of Rain in the Time of Drought.*

And among the Variety of neceſſitous Objects, none have a better Title to our Compaſſion, than thoſe, who, after having taſted the Sweets of Plenty, are, by ſome undeſerved Calamity, obliged, without ſome charitable Relief, to drag out the Remainder of Life in Miſery and Woe; who little thought they ſhould aſk their daily Bread of any but of God; who, after a Life led in Affluence, *cannot dig*, and *are aſhamed to beg*. And they are to be relieved in ſuch an endearing Manner, with ſuch a Beauty of Holineſs, that, at the ſame time that their Wants are ſupplied, their Confuſion of Face may be prevented.

There is not an Inſtance of this kind in Hiſtory ſo affecting, as that beautiful one of *Boaz* to *Ruth*. He knew her Family, and how ſhe was reduced to the loweſt Ebb: When therefore ſhe begged Leave to glean in his Fields, he ordered his Reapers to let fall ſeveral Handfuls with a ſeeming Careleſſneſs, but really with a ſet Deſign, that ſhe might gather them up without being

SERM. III.

aſhamed. Thus did he form an artful Scheme, that *he* might *give*, without the *Vanity* and *Oſtentation* of giving; and *ſhe receive*, without the *Shame* and *Confuſion* of making Acknowledgments. Take the Hiſtory in the Words of Scripture, as it is recorded in the Book of *Ruth*. *And when ſhe was riſen up to glean, Boaz commanded his young Men, ſaying; Let her glean even among the Sheaves, and rebuke her not: and let fall alſo ſome of the Handfuls of Purpoſe, and leave them that ſhe may glean them, and reproach her not.* This was not only doing a good Action; it was doing it likewiſe with a good Grace.

It is not enough we do no Harm; that we be negatively good; we muſt do Good, *poſitive* Good, if we would *enter into Life*. When it would have been as good for the World, if ſuch a Man had never lived; it would perhaps have been better for him, *if he had never been born*. A ſcanty Fortune may limit your *Beneficence*, and confine it chiefly to the Circle of your Domeſtics, Relations and Neighbours; but let your *Benevolence* extend as far as Thought can travel, to the utmoſt Bounds of the World: Juſt as it may be only in your

Power

Power to beautify the Spot of Ground that lies near and close to you; but you could wish, that as far as your eye can reach, the whole Prospect before you was chearful, that every Thing disagreeable was removed, and every Thing beautiful made more so. SERM. III.

I have dwelt so long upon this last Virtue, that I have not Time to discourse upon the rest. One Duty, however, I shall just touch upon, which will engage us to the Performance of all the rest; and that is, frequent Self-Examination, or Self-Reflection.

We need not look far to meet with Persons, who, though they have a competent Knowledge of the World, *know not what manner of Spirit they are of*; condemning the Want of Charity in others, with all the Acrimony, Fierceness and Uncharitableness imaginable; censuring People for the Defect of Candour and a Sweetness of Disposition, with that mercileſs Keenness and Eagerness of Spirit, which shews them to be, whatever others are, in the very *Gall of Bitterness*. Now the Use of such an Observation, is not so much to arraign them, as to suspect yourself. For he never knew himself rightly, who never suspected him-

SERM. III.

ſelf. We ſeldom have that *Charity* which *covers a Multitude of Faults* in our Neighbours; and we much ſeldomer want that *Self-Love* which *covers a Multitude of Faults* in *ourſelves.* The Truth is, the Bulk of Mankind do not reflect upon what they do: There could not be ſo many unkind Things ſaid or done, and ſo many kind ones omitted by thoſe, who are not void of a Senſe of Religion; if they took a Survey of every Thing that paſſed. What is indeed *notorious, extraordinary,* and *out* of the *common* Road in our Conduct, will engage our Attention: For what is notorious, and glaring, forces itſelf upon our Obſervation: But upon what is *common, ordinary,* and *frequent,* in our Intercourſe with one another, we *ſeldom reflect* at all, or at leaſt very tranſiently. *Single Acts* of Sin may be owing to ſome violent *Sally* of *Paſſion*; but a continued *Courſe* of Sinning, in any one Inſtance, muſt be owing to *Self-Deceit,* occaſioned by Want of Self-Reflection, or to the deluſive Hopes of repenting ſome Time or other. For a Man cannot otherwiſe conſtantly allow himſelf, in the Practice of what he conſtantly condemns. Without Self-Reflection, a Man may have

every

every Vice under the Sun, without knowing he has *any*; provided he has it not in a *high* Degree.

Conſider not what the World thinks of ſuch a Crime, but what it is in itſelf. For the World, in Matters of Opinion, is ſwayed more by Authority than Argument; in Matters of Practice, by Example than Rule; and in few Things is governed by pure Reaſon only. Are you as apprehenſive of a Miſtake, as cautious not to take wrong Meaſures, as vigilant and circumſpect in your grand Concernment, your eternal Welfare; as you would be in Caſes on which your Life and Fortune depended? If you are, you will ſeldom act amiſs: If you are not, you ſhew that a Worldly Temper prevails more with you, than the Hopes of God's Favour, and the Deſire of Salvation. Many excellent Books are written, many weekly Lectures are continually ſounding in our Ears, with all the Strength of Reaſoning, and Beauty of Eloquence, to perſuade us to—what? one would think it ſhould be ſomething *ſeemingly hurtful* and *diſadvantageous* to us.—No, no ſuch Thing. It is only to perſuade us, what, one would think, is no difficult Matter, and yet is the

moſt

SERM. III.

moſt difficult of all, that we would not make *ourſelves eternally miſerable*, that we would endeavour after *Eternal Happineſs*. For one, that periſhes for want of knowing his Duty, there are Numbers, who are loſt for ever, for want of ſeriouſly conſidering it, and laying it to Heart. But I am perſuaded better Things of you, my Brethren; you will reflect, that if there be not another World, there is ſcarce any Thing worth living for here; and if there be, our main Concern in *This*, is to fit ourſelves for *That*.

But this brings me, III*dly*, and *laſtly*, to conclude with a ſhort Addreſs to you.

It ſignifies little, what Notions, a Perſon ſo obſcure and undiſtinguiſhed as I am, entertain. But ſince ſeveral Perſons have been, without juſt Grounds, ſuſpected of believing differently from what they profeſs, and to have an inward Doctrine, which they reſerve to themſelves, or communicate only to ſome few ſelect Friends; I here declare, in the Preſence of God, that I am fully perſuaded of the Truth of Chriſtianity, and the important Doctrines thereof, which I have, during the Space of nine Years, oft

inculcated to you; that I chuſe to live, and hope to die in that perſuaſion; that, after having read the moſt conſiderable Books that have been written againſt it, I do not know any Objection, but what has received repeated and ſatisfactory Anſwers. A thorough Chriſtian in *Principle*, I wiſh I was as good a one in my *Practice*; and then I ſhould, in ſome meaſure, deſerve that Approbation, with which you have honoured me. SERM. III.

I heartily thank you, that you have candidly overlooked my numerous Defects, kindly accepted my well-meant Endeavours to ſerve you, both from the Deſk and from the Pulpit; and, what is more, generouſly encouraged them. And, to your other Obligations, which you have conferred on me, be pleaſed to add this, which will be the *greateſt* Obligation of all, *viz.* to make me, in ſome degree, inſtrumental to your Salvation, by deliberately weighing what I have laid down.

They are the laſt Words of a departing, though not a dying Friend; and let them therefore make a ſuitable Impreſſion. Quit not your Religion, your Truſt in God, your Virtue, for any Pleaſure or Profit, which this

Serm. III.

this World can give, for the World itſelf. For all the Profit and Pleaſure this World can give, this World itſelf may ſhortly be nothing to you: But Religion and Virtue will make you happy, when *Life's idle Employments,* and its idler Follies, when the World, when Time ſhall be no more. Falſe Friends will forſake you, and true Friends may either leave you through neceſſary Avocations, or they may be divided from you by Death: Falſe Friends will *ſtand afar off* in the Day of Trouble, and even true Friends can, in ſome Caſes, *ſtand* only *looking upon* your Miſery, afflicted indeed in all *your* Affliction, but without any Power to eaſe your Calamities: But God is a preſent Friend, infinitely powerful and good in all Caſes, at all Times, in all Places; He is able to hear us, whereſoever diſperſed; and to relieve us, howſoever diſtreſſed: Almoſt every Thing may ſeparate us from other Friends: But *neither Life nor Death, nor Principalities nor Powers,* nothing but Sin can ſeparate us from Him, and the bleſſed Influences of his Preſence.

Some there *have* been here, and ſome there *are* here, to whom I am in a parti-

cular Manner indebted; from whom I have received Obligations much greater than my Expectations, and only not ſo great as their enlarged Souls and generous Inclinations to do me good.—Some, of whom almoſt every one ſpeaks well; and few or none can ſpeak ſo well as they deſerve. It is a Pleaſure even *to be obliged* to Perſons of their Turn, *who give* liberally, and *upbraid not*; a Pleaſure only not ſo affecting as that (which is beyond my Abilities) of *obliging* them. SERM. III.

Injuries I do not remember, that I have received any from any of this Place: And for whatever Kindneſſes you have done me, may God reward you ſevenfold into your Boſom. And I do not queſtion but he will reward you: For they were deſigned to cheriſh and countenance Worth and Learning; though beſtowed on me. My Relation to you, as a Paſtor and Teacher, is now upon the Point of expiring; but there is one Relation, which will always ſubſiſt, and that is, of your affectionate and ſincere Well-wiſher: Whatever Diſtance of Place may be between us, I ſhall rejoice to hear of any Good that befals you, and be heartily ſorry for any Diſaſter that affects you.

you. My Prayers, my beſt Wiſhes (alas! what can I ſay or do more?) ſhall always be yours: For I am ſtill yours ſincerely in all good and Chriſtian Offices.

Finally, Farewel, my Brethren: To God's Grace I commend you. May he grant you everlaſting Welfare, and as much Health and Proſperity, as are conſiſtent with your everlaſting Welfare! May your Souls, while you live, improve in every Chriſtian Grace; and when ye die, may they be preſented without Spot before the Throne of Grace! May God protect you by his Power, guide you with his Counſel through the ſeveral Stages of Life, and after that receive you into Glory!

SERMON

SERMON IV.

The Nature and Duration of future Puniſhments conſidered; and the Goodneſs of God fully vindicated, as to that Article, againſt the principal Objections of ſome late Writers.

MATTHEW XXVI. 24.

It had been good for that Man, if he had not been born.

THESE Words are ſpoken of *Judas Iſcariot*, but they are applicable to *every* unrelenting Criminal; and the Senſe of them is, Whoever lives abandoned, and dies impenitent, ſhall find his Miſeries in the whole Extent of his Being to overbalance the Enjoyments he has had ſo far, that it had been happy for him not to have been at all; it being better not to be at all, than to be ſo miſerable as he ſhall

SERM. IV.

ſhall be: Or, in other Words, Non-Exiſtence, though not a Bleſſing in itſelf, is ſo, comparatively with the Torments which he ſhall endure.

This is the plain expreſs authentic Declaration of no leſs a Perſon, than our bleſſed Saviour; and it ſeems to overthrow the Opinion of *Origen*, who imagined, that the Damned ſhould be admitted to everlaſting Happineſs after a determined Period of Woe. For then it could not have been ſaid with any Truth, that the Sum of their Miſeries ſhould exceed their Pleaſures; ſince an eternal Happineſs would outweigh any finite Torments. Non-Exiſtence would not have been, in the true Eſtimate of Things, a Bleſſing to thoſe, who were certain of an exceeding and everlaſting Weight of Glory. It would be good for that Man to be born, who ſhould ſome Time or other be happy for ever.

In the Proſecution of this Subject I propoſe,

I*ſt*, To conſider the Duration of future Puniſhments:

II*dly*, To ſet forth the Nature of them:

III*dly*, To make ſome practical Inferences.

As

SERM. IV.

As to the *1st*, viz. The Duration of future Punishments.

When God shall set forth, before the united Assembly of Men and Angels, the Harmony and Consistency of his Providence, from the first Birth of Time to its last Period; it is to be humbly hoped, that merciful Abatements will be made for unavoidable Temptations, to which Men have been exposed by their Situation in Life; for the Want of a regular and virtuous Education, *&c.* And perhaps some Part of what is called *moral* Evil, may be, in the Eye of him, who *knoweth whereof we are made*, nothing but *natural* Evil; as owing to the native Impetuosity of some Mens original Complexions, and to the unactive Coldness of other Mens natural Tempers, which, whether they could wholly get the better of, God only knows. It may be likewise presumed, that the Number of the Damned will bear no more Proportion to that of the Blessed throughout the whole Creation; than a Workhouse or a Prison does to the whole Extent of a large Kingdom.

But whatever gracious Allowances may be made; it is an express Scripture Doctrine, that the Wicked *shall go away into everlast-*

SERM. IV.

ing Puniſhment; but the Righteous into Life eternal.

Let us ſuppoſe, that Mankind were to live here for ever: Let us ſuppoſe, that ſome of them were become abandoned and *incorrigibly* bad: Would it be any unjuſtifiable Severity to confine Them for ever in Priſon, that they might not ſeduce or annoy the reſt of the Creation; or even to inflict poſitive Puniſhments upon them, in their Confinement, adequate to their Offences, in order to deter others? It is only therefore to ſuppoſe, that the Soul is in its own Nature deſigned for an immortal Duration; that thoſe, who are conſigned to everlaſting Miſery, are ſuch as by a continued Courſe of Sinning have ſo diſabled all the Powers of the Soul, that it is morally impoſſible for them, without the extraordinary Grace of God, to ceaſe from Sinning: And then if it be *no Injuſtice*, as undoubtedly it is not, that *every Sinner* ſhould be a *Sufferer*; there can be no Injuſtice, that every *habitual, eternal Sinner* ſhould be an *eternal Sufferer*.

This Conſideration, I think, takes off the Force of the Objection, *viz.* That there is no Proportion between temporary Crimes, and

and eternal Punishments. But, since some have laid great Stress upon it, I shall consider it further. SERM. IV.

Ist, Let it be considered, that though the outward Acts of Sin be temporary; yet the Defilement and Habit contracted by a Repetition of these Acts is, if we die in a State of Impenitence, eternal. And as eternal ill Habits are the Source of eternal Torments; it will follow that the Impenitent have entailed upon themselves everlasting Misery. If, when Death has closed the Scene, there be no After-game to play; if all Overtures of Grace then cease; if Vice be stamped upon the Soul in indelible Characters; if *he that is filthy, must be filthy still*; then it is an undeniable Consequence, that *he, who can never cease to be wicked, can never cease to be miserable.* The veteran Sinner is steeled against all Impressions, and the Miser does not cease to love this World *with all his Soul, and with all his Strength*, even when he stands just upon the Verge of another. How often have we seen Men, that, however inconsistent in every thing else, have been very consistent in obeying one ruling, habitual Passion from first to last? Nay, we have

SERM. IV.

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SERM. IV.

ſurpriſing Inſtances upon Record, beſides that of a dying Miſer; that even at the Cloſe of Life, the grand and important Criſis, that is to determine a Man's Happineſs or Miſery; even then this ruling Paſſion would bear no Rival, no Competitor near the Throne. Even then, like a domineering Favourite, who has long maintained the Aſcendant; it would not, for fear of being ſupplanted, admit any thing to his Death-bed, but what countenanced its Intereſts, and was ſubſervient to its Orders. What our Saviour ſaid to St. *Peter*, may be applied to an old habitual Sinner. *When thou waſt young, thou girdeſt thyſelf, and went whither thou wouldſt; but when thou art old, another ſhall bind thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldſt not.* His Sins ſhall bind him, and carry him into Captivity. He will be apt to think, if he thinks at all to the Purpoſe; Why had I not the ſame Sentiments when young, as I have now? Or why have I not now the ſame vigorous Strength, which I had then, to break my Bonds aſunder? Some have ſo much enfeebled the Powers of the Soul, that their Reaſon, like the Light of the Sun, when the Face of Nature is overſpread

ſpread with Fogs, is juſt ſtrong enough to ſhew and render viſible the melancholy Scene, but not ſtrong enough to overcome and diſperſe the Vapours. SERM. IV.

Thus often in *this* World Habits ſeem to be incorporated into the Soul, and to be, as it were, Parts of our Selves: And if we carry our Enquiries farther, with the Light of Revelation in our Hands, we ſhall diſcover, that they are for ever rooted in the Mind in the *next* World. St. *Paul*, in the xiiith Chapter of his firſt Epiſtle to the *Corinthians*, diſcourſes upon Charity, not as an *occaſional Act*, but as a ruling, *ſtanding Principle*. *If I give*, ſays he, *all my Goods to feed the Poor, and have not Charity, it profiteth me nothing*: i. e. Though I ſhould practiſe ſome occaſional Acts of Charity, however great; yet unleſs it be a ſettled Principle, it will be of no Avail. Well, what becomes of this habitual Charity? *Charity never faileth; but whether there be Prophecies, they ſhall fail; whether there be Tongues, they ſhall ceaſe; whether there be Knowledge, it ſhall vaniſh away*. That is, Prophecies, Languages, and our imperfect Knowledge, which is but Ignorance in Compariſon, ſhall end

SERM. IV.

with this World: But the Habit of Charity ſhall remain beyond this tranſitory Scene of Things, and accompany the Mind into Heaven, and there remain with it to all Eternity; as immortal as the Soul, and as extenſive as the Creation. Now if good Habits ſhall follow their Poſſeſſors into another World, and there abide with them; then ill Habits will, by Parity of Reaſon, do ſo too.

This appears farther from the Caſe of Thoſe Angels, which *kept not their firſt Eſtate.* Could any thing have reduced thoſe accurſed Spirits to a State of Submiſſion to their Maker; one would have thought, that the Fruitleſſneſs of their former Attempt, the ſevere Vengeance they already felt, and the Dread of a much ſeverer that hung over them, if they perſiſted in their Wickedneſs; and the Hopes of mitigating their Doom, if they deſiſted; might at leaſt have made them *paſſively* obedient: But though they *believe and tremble,* yet ſtill they go on to act contrary to the Conviction of their own Minds; ſtill they *go about ſeeking whom they may devour*; ſtill they proceed in a State of Hoſtility to their Creator: So ſtedfaſt is Malice, ſo unconquerable

querable is Pride. And this will be the Caſe of the Damned. For as the Good are to be as the Angels of God; the Bad will be as the Angels of Darkneſs. SERM IV.

Whatever inborn Freedom of Mind we might have; an inbred habitual Slavery to depraved Affections, will, in Proceſs of Time, deſtroy it: The Abilities may be cramped, and the Powers of the Soul, as well as the Organs of the Body, ſo far maimed, as to be incapable of anſwering thoſe valuable Purpoſes, for which they were originally deſigned. *From him that hath not* any Improvement, our Saviour expreſly ſaith, *ſhall be taken away even that which he hath*, the original Faculty and Power to do Good. Beſides, though we may endeavour to get rid of thoſe *outward* Calamities, which are generally *forced* upon us, in Oppoſition to our ſtrongeſt Inclinations; we ſeldom make it heartily our Buſineſs to remove thoſe *inward* Miſeries, which we *voluntarily bring* upon *ourſelves*. Though we feel ourſelves unhappy; yet as they are our own *Choice*, we *applaud* and *juſtify* ourſelves in it, through the unrelenting Stubbornneſs of a corrupt Will. Thus the Jealous, the Melancholy,

Serm. IV.

the Envious, the Revengeful, dwell upon every thing that may foment and heighten their reſpective Paſſions, whatever Torments they may labour under from them; and ſhut out each Conſideration that may make againſt them. A Man cannot practiſe Virtue, without effectually willing it: And how can he effectually will that, to which his Will, by a long uninterrupted Attachment to Vice, is utterly averſe? A long Continuance in vicious Pleaſures is to the Soul, what Iron Chains are to the Body of him, who has lain long in them: The Chains may be ſtruck off, but the Canker, and Ruſt, if they have eaten into the Fleſh, will remain, and may diſable him ever after. Juſt ſo worldly Pleaſures may ceaſe with this World; but the Pollution, groſs Conceptions and the Indiſpoſition to refined and liberal Delights, which they leave behind, may continue to obſtruct the Freedom of the Soul, and deſtroy its native Energy *. Now when the whole Bent of the Soul ſtands the wrong Way, when all

* Qui in compedibus corporis ſemper fuerunt, etiam cum ſoluti ſunt, tardius ingrediuntur; ut hi, qui ferro vincti multos annos fuerunt. *Ciceronis Tuſculanæ Diſputationes*; Page 66. Editio *Daviſ.*

our

our Deſires are riveted to vicious Objects; it is no hard Matter to foreſee, that Miſery, eternal Miſery, muſt be the unavoidable Reſult. When we are as it were *bound Hand and Foot* by ill Habits; when the Spring of the Soul, by which ſhe ſhould recover herſelf, which every vicious Act muſt weaken, is, by a continued Reiteration of them, quite broken; the Conſequence is, that we muſt be *caſt into outer Darkneſs.*

Now where can be the Injuſtice, that God ſhould ſuffer thoſe Evils to take place, which a Man has brought upon himſelf, by counteracting the Will of God? Where can be the Injuſtice, that thoſe ſhould be for ever excluded from Heaven, who, by a viciated Reliſh, have diſqualified themſelves for heavenly Bliſs? If Happineſs be nothing but the Employment of the Faculties of the Soul upon *ſuitable* Objects; it is certain, that *celeſtial* and *ſpiritual* Objects cannot *ſuit* a Soul, which being long and deeply immerſed in ſenſual Delights, has contracted an habitual *Diſtaſte* for them. As Man was the Creature of God's Hands, he was enabled and deſigned to be a Partaker of Happineſs, and a Sharer of a bleſſed Immortality with himſelf: But as he is an habitual

Serm. IV.

habitual Sinner, and in that Reſpect the Creature of his own Hands, he has made himſelf eternally miſerable, by thoſe Habits, which are the Foundation of Hell.

So far, perhaps, you may be willing to allow, there is no Colour of Injuſtice: But this, you will ſay, does not account for the Perpetuity of *poſitive* Puniſhments for temporary Crimes. To which I anſwer, that even the Threats of eternal *poſitive* Penalties are not the *rigorous* Decrees of *mere* Will and Pleaſure; they are ſo many *kindly Forewarnings* of the *neceſſary* Effects of a rooted Averſion to Goodneſs. For it may be *neceſſary* to ſecure the Happineſs of the Bleſſed, that, though the Good and Bad, like the Wheat and Tares, are blended together here; they ſhould, at the End of the World, be finally *ſevered* the one from the other. It may be *neceſſary*, that if *every* Region of *Joy* and *Comfort* throughout the Creation be peopled with *unoffending* Beings; the deſperately *Wicked* ſhould be thruſt down (which is a poſitive Puniſhment) into Places, where *no* Joy and Comfort dwells, and there for ever impriſoned; that their Rancour and Malice might prey upon themſelves, or be

diſcharged

diſcharged upon their Fellow-Criminals; which, if let looſe, might diſturb the innocent Part of the World. The divine Sanctions, you ſee then, are not the arbitrary Impoſitions of Sovereign Power; they are the genuine Reſult of infinite Wiſdom and Goodneſs, which, in Pity to the Univerſe, has enacted them, that the whole may receive no Detriment. And whatever other poſitive Puniſhments may be ſuperadded; they will be exactly adjuſted to the Demerits of each Offender. The Scripture expreſsly declares, that the Wicked will be beaten with fewer or more Stripes, in proportion to the different Degrees of their Wickedneſs. SERM. IV.

2*dly*, Let thoſe, who inſiſt ſo much upon it, that the Puniſhment is diſproportioned to the Crime; reflect, whether they do not conſider Sin in *one* View, either as to the *Fact abſtractedly*, or as to the *Time* which the Perpetration of the Fact takes up; without conſidering it in *all Views*, and in all its *Conſequences*; which yet is the only Way to form a true Judgment of the Malignity of it. For the Puniſhment is not diſproportioned to Sin, habitual Sin; if conſidered with all its numerous Train

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Sermon. IV.

of ill Conſequences; the Conſequences being ſuch, that if unreſtrained it would ſoon involve the whole World in one promiſcuous Ruin and Deſolation. It is true, one Man cannot do all this Miſchief. But then one Man, who, for Inſtance, acts unjuſtly, contributes his Part to the Introduction of univerſal Diſorder and Miſery. If all ſhould act as unjuſtly as himſelf, (and all have as much Right as any one Man) the Foundations of the moral World would be quite out of Courſe.

To explain this by a familiar Inſtance, one Perſon robs another of a ſmall Sum of Money; he is taken and ſuffers Death for the Fact: Now what Proportion is there between the Puniſhment and the Crime; between depriving a Man of *what* he perhaps could very well *ſpare*, and depriving the Perſon that did it of his *Life*, of his *all* in this World? None at all, if we conſider the Crime in this *Light only:* But if we view it in *all its Tendencies*, then the Crime is adequate to the Puniſhment; ſince it tends to render Property, and what is valuable in this Life, precarious, and to ſubvert the Peace of Society.

We know not, we cannot know, how far

far the Conſequences of any one Sin may extend, how far the Influence of our Behaviour may affect all that lie within the Sphere of our Activity, thoſe beneath us, and about us, our Domeſtics, Relations, and Neighbours. And theſe again may ſpread the Contagion farther. Thoſe that are vicious in a leſs Degree, however they may blame the Corruption of the World in general, are acceſſary to that very Corruption. It is here as in a Battle: Every Perſon who fled, is apt to ſhift off the Blame from himſelf, and to lay it upon his Fellow-Soldiers: But if each Perſon, who gave way, had ſtood his Ground; what was a general Rout, would have been a complete Victory. Sin then deſerves the *greateſt Evil*, becauſe it is oppoſite to the *greateſt Good*, the *univerſal* Intereſt: And as a confirmed Habit of Sin implies the Love of it, a *continual Love* of what is oppoſite to the *greateſt Good*, muſt *continually* or for ever deſerve the *greateſt Evil*.

We may harangue as long as we pleaſe upon God's Benevolence: But no Arguments can be drawn from it to ſoften the ſeeming Rigour of the divine Sanctions. For univerſal Benevolence muſt conſult the

Serm. IV.

Good of the whole; which can never be done by abating the Penalties threatned to Vice; and much leſs by removing all Apprehenſions of ſuffering hereafter, and conſequently emboldening Wickedneſs; but by awakening *careleſs* Sinners, and ſtriking a Terror into *determined* Offenders. Whatever Sanctions are moſt effectual to compaſs this End, muſt be moſt agreeable to the Goodneſs of the divine Legiſlator, who cannot promote the Happineſs of the whole, without ſecuring the Obſervance of his Laws. If to *annex* ſuch *Penalties* be for the *Good* of the *whole*; then what is for the *Good* of the *whole*, cannot be Injuſtice to any *particular* Perſon; ſince the *Good* of each *particular* Perſon is naturally and *originally* wrapt up in, and connected with, *that* of the *whole*. And there is a *previous Obligation* upon every one that comes into the World, either to *do* thoſe *Duties*, or *ſubmit* to thoſe *Penalties*, which preſerve or promote the *general Happineſs*, with which *his own* was *primarily interwoven*. God would have enforced our Obedience to Him with *leſs* Penalties, if leſs had been *ſufficient*. But it is plain, that leſs Puniſhments would not have anſwered the End; ſince even thoſe

thoſe that he has denounced, do not, in many Caſes, check the Growth of Vice and awe a wicked World into a Compliance with his Will. SERM. IV.

It is a Miſtake therefore, and a dangerous one too, to admit, as ſome late Writers have done, of no penal Evils in the next World, but what terminate in the *Benefit* of the Sufferer and are for the *Amendment* of the immortal Agent. Upon that Suppoſition, there would be *no Hell* properly ſpeaking; there would only be a *Purgatory:* And the *abandoned* and *incurably* bad, who merit the *greateſt* Severity, would eſcape with abſolute *Impunity*; becauſe *no Puniſhment* could produce an *Amendment* in them. Beſides, all Puniſhments, which come from God, have not even in *this* Life been intended for the *Reformation* of the Criminal; ſome of them have been for the utter *Exciſion* and Extirpation of the irreclaimable, when once they have *filled up the Meaſure of their Iniquities:* Such were the Deluge, and the unprecedented Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, not to mention many other Inſtances. Hell is every where in Scripture repreſented as the very Reverſe of a Place intended for the

SERM. IV.

the Exercise of benevolent Affections, without which none shall inherit the Kingdom of God. It is described as a State of Horror and Despair, where, as St. *John* says, *they blasphemed the God of Heaven, and repented not to give God the Glory.* It cannot therefore be a proper Scene to reclaim the Guilty, and to purify the Soul.

Some there are, who take Shelter in the Thoughts of Annihilation, and hope, or pretend to hope, that God will uncreate the Soul, and deprive it of Being. And is Annihilation then their only Hope? A sad gloomy Hope, and an horrid Consolation! To be as if they had never been, devoid of Consciousness, Sense and Motion, to have all those busy Workings of the Mind, all those active Thoughts, which wander through this World, and lose themselves agreeably in the next, lost and swallowed up for ever in utter Extinction of Being; is this their only Resource? this, at which Nature, which always struggles hard for Self-Preservation, starts back with Horror?

Yet, alas! they are even cut off from this dreadful, this, I had almost said, desperate Hope. For if Annihilation be the only Punishment which shall be inflicted on

on Sinners; then all Sinners, however *unequal their Crimes* may be, would be *equally punished.* If all were alike to be deprived of Being; God would make *no Distinction*, where there is a very material *Difference*, between the greatest and the least of Sinners. SERM. IV.

Farther, the Soul is an uncompounded, immaterial Being, and therefore not corruptible as Matter is. Now if God has created the Soul in its Nature immortal; then he cannot uncreate, or render it mortal, without acting contrary to the fixed and stated Laws of Nature: But God never acts contrary to his stated Laws, except upon some extraordinary Emergency. Well then, where is the extraordinary Occasion, that the Deity should supersede his own Laws, and put forth an immediate Act of Almighty Power, to reduce those Souls to nothing, which he had empowered to subsist for ever? How can it be expected, that He, who never annihilates the *least* Particle of *Matter*, the least insignificant Atom, should annihilate a *spiritual* Substance? Why a Set of obstinately rebellious Creatures have plunged themselves into Misery, by wilfully, deliberately, and frequently breaking the Laws of *Morality*: And

SERM. IV. do they expect, that God will remove that Misery, by breaking through the Laws of Nature, which he has established upon the matureſt Wiſdom, for the Good of the Whole?

Yes, ſays the Objectors: For he does not love to inflict *uſeleſs* and *unavailing* Miſery upon his Creatures: And it is aſked, what Uſe the Puniſhment of theſe unhappy Objects can be of? To which I anſwer, that we, whoſe Judgments are very ſhallow, muſt not pretend to arraign his Proceedings, which are *like the great Deep*. This we may take for granted, that *no Evil* is ſuffered to continue in the Creation, but to prevent or avoid a *greater*. And the Continuance of theſe Beings in their wretched Exiſtence may be of Advantage to let the *World* in *general* know the deplorable Conſequences of an audacious Perſeverance in a wilful Rebellion to their Creator, and to confirm the *Bleſſed* in *particular* in their Happineſs. For the Bleſſed in Heaven are endued with Freedom of Will. We know indeed, becauſe God hath promiſed it; that, notwithſtanding this Freedom of Will, they will never fall from that bliſsful State. But whether the Reflection on the Puniſhment

Puniſhment of the Wicked may not be one conſiderable Means, among others, to keep them invariably firm in an uninterrupted Practice of Goodneſs, and conſequently in an uninterrupted Enjoyment of Happineſs; this, I preſume, we cannot determine. In God's *Houſe*, the World, *there are many Manſions*; and Variety of Beings may ſtill continue to people the Variety of Apartments in the Univerſe, after this Earth is diſſolved. Perhaps, as the Fall of the Angels is revealed to us; ſo theſe unhappy Sufferers may ſerve to give awakening Notices to others, who inhabit ſome other Part of the Creation, leſt they alſo fall into the ſame State of Condemnation. Be that as it will; God has a thouſand Ways of bringing Good, general Good, out of partial Evil, and making the Puniſhment of the Bad, as well as Happineſs of the Good, terminate in his own Glory. SERM. IV.

This may ſerve as an Anſwer to thoſe, who aſk, why God would produce into the World Beings, who he foreſaw would be eternally miſerable? The Reply is obvious. Why did he produce into the World Beings, that he foreſaw would be expoſed here to innumerable Misfortunes? Why

SERM. IV. did he permit, what he could not but foreſee, temporal Evils; ſuch as Volcano's, Earthquakes, Famines, Plagues, *&c.*? But theſe *temporary Evils*, you will ſay, are productive of ſome *greater temporary Good*. Well; if God may permit a *temporary Evil*, which he foreſaw, to take place, becauſe productive of a *greater temporary Good*; why may he not permit an *eternal Evil*, which he foreſaw, to take place, becauſe productive of an *eternal Good*? Or will theſe Perſons demonſtrate, that no eternal Good can reſult by God's infinite Wiſdom, from an eternal Evil? But there is a wide Difference between temporary and eternal Evils: It is granted; yet the ſame Principle, which vindicates God's Ways with Men, as to *temporary* Curſes, acquits him likewiſe as to ſuffering *eternal* Evils, *viz.* That from both he can draw a much *greater Good*, and cauſe what is Evil *reſpectively* to a *few*, to be abſolutely Good upon the *Whole*.

Knowing the Terror of the Lord, ſays St. *Paul*, *we perſuade Men*. Yet ſome very worthy Perſons, miſled, I conceive, by an Exceſs of Good-Nature, have weakened, inſtead of alarming, the Terrors of the

the Wicked. Those good Men, who oppose this Doctrine, may have to do with others that are not so; and one would be glad to know, where they *would*, or indeed where they *can* stop. If *eternal* Punishments be thought excessive by them, will not others remonstrate against a Punishment of a *thousand* Years as of too long a Duration for the Sins of this short Life? Nay, will not that of an *hundred* Years, or *fifty*; or indeed any *given Space* of Time, that is *considerable*, be liable to the same Objection? There is no End of yielding, and one Concession does but pave the Way to another. When once they have given up the Eternity of Punishments, when once they have deserted that Post, which was strictly tenable; they may be driven backwards by those, who will dispute every Inch of Ground with them; till at last they have not sufficient Ground left to stand upon.

And let them seriously reflect, what they are doing. Whether at a Time, when the Torrent of Wickedness rises high, and makes every thinking Man besides themselves afraid; whether at such a Juncture it be proper to break down, or lower those

SERM. IV. Fences and Mounds, which keep out the Overflowings of Ungodlineſs? "Our Deſire, "and Love, and Hope, (ſays a great "Writer *) are not ſo apt to be wrought "upon by the Promiſes of Rewards and "Happineſs; as our Fear is from the Ap-"prehenſion of the Divine Diſpleaſure. "For, (as he obſerves) though we have "loſt in a great meaſure the Guſt and "Reliſh of true Happineſs; yet we ſtill re-"tain a quick Senſe of Pain and Miſery."

Celſus, though a profeſſed Enemy to Chriſtianity, yet commends the Chriſtians for maintaining that *the Good ſhould be happy hereafter*; but *the Unrighteous doomed to Puniſhments ſtrictly eternal: From which Opinion*, ſays he, *neither let them, nor any other Mortal depart* †. But I proceed,

II*dly*, To conſider the Nature of future Puniſhments.

Some there are, who will not allow, that *God* immediately and *directly*, by a *poſitive* Act, confers any Rewards upon Virtue, or inflicts any Puniſhment upon

* Archbiſhop *Tillotſon*, Vol. I. Page 3d.
† *Celſus apud Origenem*; Pag. 409. Editio *Cantab.*

Vice,

Vice, here or hereafter. All the Penalties and Rewards they admit of are ſuch, as *naturally* flow from our Actions. Thus they make Hell to be nothing but a Remorſe of Conſcience, an inſeparable Attendant, as they think, on Wickedneſs. This is, in effect, to dethrone God as a Legiſlator, to weaken the Intereſts of Virtue, and to make dangerous Conceſſions in favour of Vice. For, if this Scheme were true; then the *greateſt Sinners* would have the *leaſt Puniſhment*, perhaps *none* at all: For the *greateſt* Sinners are hardened, *paſt* all *Remorſe*, all *Feeling*, but that of *Pain*. Thoſe, on the other hand, that have made the *leaſt* Advances in Vice, would bear the *greateſt* Puniſhment, as they would feel the *moſt Remorſe*. Whereas God moſt *abhors*, and conſequently will *moſt ſeverely puniſh*, thoſe, who are ſo far from having any *Compunctions* of Conſcience, that they *delight in Wickedneſs*. SERM. IV.

We have ſtanding Proofs of the Deluge to this Day. The *Exuviæ* of Sea Creatures, the numerous Beds of Shell-Fiſh, and other Spoils of the Ocean depoſited on the higheſt Hills, found not only in Iſlands, but in Continents, where the Sea could never

SERM. IV.

come, but by a Miracle, are ſo many inconteſtable Demonſtrations and *authentic Monuments* of the *Deluge*; as *that* is an *authentic Monument* of God's *Juſtice* and Vengeance; and that He, who cut off all the old World except eight Perſons, for their Sins, is not a Being quite ſo eaſy in reſpect of Vice, as we may fondly imagine. In ſhort, the whole Univerſe witneſſeth, that a Deluge of Waters once overſpread the Univerſe. And if even in *this* World, which is deſigned for a State of *Trial* and *Probation*, and not for an exact diſtributive *Juſtice*, proportioned to Mens ſeveral Merits and Demerits, God could involve all Mankind, except ſome few, in one promiſcuous Ruin; what Puniſhments may await the Impenitent, when the laſt deciſive *Day* of *Juſtice* and *Judgment* cometh? May not thoſe Senſes, which God has created to be ſo many *Inlets* of *Pleaſure*, become ſo many *Avenues* of *Pain* and *Anguiſh*?

I know ſome have denied a local Hell. But it is very clear from Scripture. *Depart from me, ye Workers of Iniquity, into the Fire prepared for the Devil and his Angels.* i. e. Depart from the Place, where I am; into

into that, where the Devil and his Angels are to be. And again, the Devils *beſought* our Saviour, *that he would not command them to go out into the Deep*; or, as it is in the Original, into the Abyſs. It appears then that the Bad go from this World, where there is only a *Mixture* of Evils, into a Scene of *mere* Miſery, Horror, and Torment. If God, who *delights* to communicate *Happineſs* to as *many* Beings as the Univerſe can *conveniently hold*, has, in purſuance of this Scheme, filled every *beautiful* and *agreeable* Province in it with Creatures *ſuſceptive* of *Felicity* in the Purſuit of Virtue and Perfection; the neceſſary Conſequence is, that thoſe Creatures, who have *diſqualified* themſelves for *Happineſs*, muſt be condemned to *diſmal* and *uncomfortable* Manſions; from which, probably, after the laſt Adjuſtment of Things, there will be no Outlet, nor Poſſibility of making an Inroad upon the reſt of the Creation. There will be a Congruity between the Nature of the Place, and that of the Inhabitants, which will ſettle them there; and every one, like *Judas*, *muſt go to his own Place*. It is idle to diſpute, whether the Fire denounced againſt the unrelenting

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SERM. IV.

be metaphorical or real. Suppoſe it a Metaphor; yet thoſe Metaphors, which repreſent Things of another World, do not generally exceed the Originals, or the Reality of the Things deſigned to be ſhadowed out by them.

The Ingredients of future Puniſhment are partly poſitive, and partly the natural Conſequences of bad Actions, *viz.* Appetites ever craving and clamorous, but ever unſatisfied; *Tribulation and Anguiſh upon every Soul that doth Evil:* An eternal Baniſhment from the bleſſed Preſence of God, and the Society of Angels, and *juſt Men made perfect*; and a Confinement to the Company of malicious Spirits, an everlaſting Torment to themſelves, and ever tormenting all about them.

My God, my God, why haſt thou forſaken me? Our Saviour cried out, when he felt only a *momentary* and *partial* Eclipſe of the Light of the divine Countenance. But when a deep and genuine Deſpair ſaddens the Scene all around, without the leaſt Beam of Light from any Point of Heaven; then—I was going to deſcribe the Miſery. But if Words can paint this Night-Piece of Horror, the Copy muſt be drawn by thoſe,

those, whose Unhappiness it will be to be too-well acquainted with the Original. Here *the Body pressed down the Soul, and the earthly Tabernacle the Mind, that mused upon many Things:* But when the Soul shall be clothed with refined Matter, which will not encumber her in her Operations; her whole Duration will be one continued Stretch of Thought, without any Pause or Intermission. And what a Misery must it be to be thinking still; and yet to have little or nothing to think on, but endless Misery? To be at once deprived of all sensual Delights, and cut off from the Enjoyment of rational and substantial Bliss, is a Misery that we cannot now conceive, and—may we never feel!

That this may never be our Portion, let us, III*dly*, attend to such practical Inferences, as arise from what I have before laid down.

I*st*, Beware of evil Habits. It is impossible to overcome intirely our *first* Nature; and it is next to impossible to overcome long-standing *Habits*, which are our *second* Nature. To destroy the Power of Vice is like laying *the Ax to the Root of the Tree;*

SERM. IV.

Tree: And it is not *one Stroke*, however vigorous, or *one Endeavour*, which will bring the Tree down, and *root* it *up*; though it may contribute towards it: No, there muſt be *ſeveral repeated Strokes*, and a continued *Perſeverance*, to gain the *deciſive Victory* over it, and to finiſh its Ruin; however deeply rooted. When Sin has had for a long Time the Dominion over us, our Reſolutions of Amendment will be, according to the beautiful Thought of St. *Auſtin*, "like the Endeavours of thoſe, "who are trying to wake out of a deep "Sleep, into which they ſink back again, "overcome by the dead Weight, which "hangs upon them." Take care then of your Actions: Every evil Action is a Step towards an evil Habit; and every evil Habit is a Step towards that bottomleſs Gulph, from which there is no Return. For when once ill Habits are rivetted in the Soul, you are miſerable for ever, by a *Neceſſity of Nature*; you have made yourſelf an Object incapable of Mercy, and indiſpoſed to receive the Communications of the divine Favour. Let it be acknowledged that a ſincere and thorough Repentance, implying an *entire Change* of the *Heart*, can never

never be too late; but let it be likewise granted, that a late Repentance is very seldom in this Sense sincere. If the Man were reinstated in his former Health, *Ease* possibly might *recant the Vows, that were made in Pain, as null and void.* SERM. IV.

2*dly*, As you are to avoid evil Habits, be sure betimes to acquire good Habits, as the necessary Qualifications for Heaven. Some seem to think, that Religion consists in some *broken disjointed Acts* of Piety: But let them not deceive themselves: True Religion consists in the *inward Frame* of the Mind, in the standing Bent of the Inclinations, in *settled Habits* of Piety constantly residing in the Breast, and, as often as there is Opportunity, breaking forth into outward Acts. Thus a Man shall think himself devout, if he now and then *occasionally* says his Prayers, and frequents the public Worship; though he often absents himself upon *every slight* Occasion, upon *no* Occasion at all. But let him not deceive himself: If he were really devout, he would have a Relish for Acts of Piety, his Heart would *cleave stedfastly unto God*; and then he would not neglect private or public Prayers upon frivolous Pretences. Thus again a Man

Serm. IV.

ſhall think himſelf charitable, becauſe he now and then performs *occaſional tranſient* Acts of Charity: But he alone is a charitable Man, who *loves Mercy* and Charity, and *ſheweth* that he loves them, by the main *Tenor* and *Current* of his Actions; who, with a ſtrong Benevolence of Soul, is glad to relieve proper Objects of Charity when he can; and ſincerely ſorry when he cannot. And yet the very Sorrows of the Charitable give more ſubſtantial Satisfaction than the Joys of the Selfiſh. For Compaſſion for the Diſtreſſed (a Sorrow of which the charitable are moſt ſuſceptible) gives them to underſtand, that the habitual Diſpoſition of their Mind is right: And he, who does not feel that lovely Diſpoſition within, muſt want a Pleaſure, the Abſence of which no other Pleaſure can counterbalance. He is a thoroughly good Man, who has often *tried* and *found* his Virtue *genuine*, and *clear* of all *Oſtentation*; who, inſtead of *boaſting* or *complaining*, loves to *conceal* the *Good* he *does*, and the *Ills* he *ſuffers*; who thinks *that* Happineſs ſcarce any at all, which is *ſolitary* and *uncommunicated*; as Paradiſe was no Paradiſe to *Adam*, till he had a Partner of it. Till we have acquired an habitually-good Bent of Temper, we have not

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acquired thoſe Qualifications, which are the main Ground-work and Foundation of our future Happineſs: We are not *meet to be Partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light.* SERM. IV.

Therefore, 3*dly*, let us all conſider, that our *future* Miſery or Happineſs depends upon our *preſent Behaviour.* Our Happineſs in *Manhood* depends upon thoſe early Accompliſhments, which we have acquired in our *younger* Years. If that proper Seed-Time of Life be neglected, we muſt expect no Harveſt in the Autumn of it. Juſt ſo our Felicity in *another* Life muſt be owing to the Preparations we make for it *here.* And what we *muſt be to all Eternity,* will be the Conſequence of what *we have been* in *this* World.

There is a certain *Fool-hardineſs* prevailing among us in relation to a *future* State. Men *live* as careleſsly or profligately, as if they *never* were to *depart* this Life; and then *depart* this Life with as much Stupidity and Hardneſs of Heart, as if they *never* were to *live again.* They ruſh unprepared into the Preſence of the *juſt*, the *holy* Legiſlator of the whole World, as inconſiderately and audaciouſly, *as the Horſe ruſhes to the Battle,* a Creature not capable of being frighted with Conſequences, becauſe incapable of reflecting

SERM. IV.

ing upon them. God, ſay they, is *all Goodneſs*; and therefore they dare to be what he muſt *neceſſarily* hate, the very *Reverſe* of Him—*all Wickedneſs*: Not conſidering, that *the Goodneſs of God* ſhould *lead them to Repentance*. For God *cannot love* a Nature directly and habitually contrary to his; and cannot *but* love what is in ſome degree conformable to his Holineſs and Purity. Now what he loves muſt be for ever happy; and what he hates for ever miſerable. Let Men think or ſay what they will to the contrary; it is *Goodneſs* which *ought* to make every immoral Agent *afraid*, a determined, *impartial*, *univerſal* Goodneſs in a Being, who, *becauſe* he is *infinitely Good*, will inflict every *deſerved Evil*, which is productive of a *prepollent Good*; and will inflict *none*, *but* what is productive of ſuch; who will conſult the univerſal Intereſt, and not that of a *few incurable Members* of the whole ſtupendous *Body* of the Univerſe.

Such Men would do well to reflect, that Men even here in the natural Courſe of Things bring upon themſelves ſuch ill Habits of Body, and Miſeries of all Kinds, that they can never extricate themſelves from, as long as they live. The Courſe

of

of Nature is ſo eſtabliſhed, that Death alone ſometimes puts a Period to thoſe Ills, which they have plunged themſelves into by their Follies and Vices: If they were to live for ever, they would be probably miſerable for ever, by the ill Conſequences of their Sins, which take place in a *natural* Way. Now whatever comes to paſs by the *ſettled Courſe* of *Nature*, is as much done by *him*, who *appointed* the Courſe of Things, and foreſaw every Conſequence that would ariſe from every Manner of Acting; as if he had *immediately inflicted* the *Puniſhment* himſelf. And as the ſame God, who appointed the Nature of Things here, is the God of the other World as well as this; may not ſomething like this come to paſs in that other State? May not the Impenitent be for ever lamenting thoſe Ills, which no Prudence can redreſs, no Patience make ſupportable, and no Time put a Period to?

SERM. IV.

I cannot conclude this Head, without wiſhing, that *all* of us may *believe* the Doctrine which I have here inculcated, to be true; and that this Belief, with the Concurrence of other Motives, may have that Effect, that *none* of us may *feel* it to be ſo.

SERMON V.

The Nature, Poſſibility and Truth of a particular Providence ſet forth.

PSALM CXIII. 5.

Who is like unto the Lord our God, who hath his Dwelling ſo high; and yet humbleth himſelf to behold the Things that are in Heaven and Earth?

SERM. V.

IT is one great Recommendation of the Sacred Writings, that they have expreſſed themſelves with more Juſtneſs of Thought concerning the Nature of God, than any other Compoſitions whatever. What the Vanity of Science, falſely ſo called, has aſcribed to *Nature*, or to *ſecond* Cauſes, *excluſively* of the Firſt, is by them reſolved into the *immediate* Will and *Providence* of *God*. This is the trueſt Philoſophy, as well as the beſt Divinity. For what is Nature? is it an *underſtanding* Being? or is it *not*? If it be *not*, how can an *unde-*

SERM. V.

ſigning Being produce plain Notices of *Contrivance* and *Deſign?* If it be an *Underſtanding* Being, who acts throughout the Univerſe; then it is that great Being, whom we call GOD. For Nature, Neceſſity, and Chance, mere Phantoms, which have no Reaſon, Wiſdom, or Power, cannot act, with the utmoſt Exactneſs of Wiſdom, powerfully, inceſſantly, and every where. And here I would obſerve, that no Words are more *undetermined* in their Signification, than thoſe, which paſs current in *common* Converſation. We never queſtion, but that we clearly *underſtand* Terms, which are daily in uſe, and *familiar* to us: Whereas thoſe Words are often mere *Sounds*, without *Senſe*, or any *ſettled* Signification. Thus few ſeem to know (though it is the only clear and determinate Meaning of it) that Nature in this Caſe means nothing, but the *conſtant* and *ſtated* Operation of *God* upon *Matter*.

We have no leſs Reaſon to *beg our daily Bread* of Almighty God, than the *Iſraelites* had to pray for their Suſtenance, when they were fed with *Manna from Heaven*. For that a Handful of Corn ſhould multiply to a prodigious Degree, and that the Fields ſhould

ſhould *ſtand ſo thick with Corn, that they ſhould laugh and ſing*, muſt be aſcribed to God; as well as that the *Food of Angels* was given from above to the *Iſraelites*: Becauſe a regular, *conſtant* and *uniform* Effect, in which there are evident Traces of Wiſdom and Benevolence, ſtands as much in need of the Operation of a wiſe and benevolent Being, equal to the Effect, to produce it *conſtantly* at ſet Times and Seaſons; as an *occaſional*, infrequent, and extraordinary Phænomenon does to produce it *now and then*, when an extraordinary Occaſion offers.

The *Generation* of a human Body in the *ordinary* Way is no more to be accounted for by the Laws of Mechaniſm, than the *raiſing* of a dead Body from the *Grave*: And the only aſſignable Motive, why we attribute the latter to the immediate Agency of God, and not the former, is, that the latter is an *unuſual* Operation of the Deity. If we ſaw Bodies *commonly* riſe from the Grave, as we do Corn from Seed ſown in the Earth; we ſhould endeavour to explain this Effect, juſt as we do the other, from philoſophical Cauſes excluſive of the Firſt *.

* See Dr. *Clarke*'s Reply to *Leibnitz*, Page 351.

No Beings, but what have *Life* and *Senſe*, can, in Propriety of Speech, be termed Cauſes: All other Things, being *dead* and *unactive*, are only like Tools in the Hand of a Workman: And whatever we aſcribe to *Matter* of a *paſſive* Being, muſt be reſolved into *his* Will, who uſeth *Matter* as an *Inſtrument*. Can Matter, which reſiſts every Change of State, effect what it reſiſts, not only move itſelf, but change its Motion from a ſtraight to a circular one, and give itſelf a new Direction; as the Planets muſt do to deſcribe their Orbits round the Sun?

But I need not inſiſt upon this Point any longer. For to deny a Providence in general, is, in effect, to deny a God. If there be a God *inveſted* with the *Attributes* of infinite Power, Wiſdom and Goodneſs; Providence is nothing but the *Exerciſe* of thoſe Attributes, *viz.* his Wiſdom, Power and Goodneſs on the Creation in general. It cannot be ſuppoſed, that he will let thoſe Attributes lie dormant in Him in a State of Inaction, without exerting them at all.

A *general* Providence then muſt be granted: But a *particular* Providence is clogged with ſome Difficulties. I ſhall therefore, to remove them, *Iſt*,

I*ſt*, State the Doctrine of a particular Providence. SERM. V.

II*dly*, Shew the Poſſibility of it.

III*dly*, I ſhall prove the Certainty and Truth of it.

IV*thly*, Subjoin and conclude with ſome practical Reflections.

I*ſt*, Then, I am to ſtate the Doctrine of a particular Providence.

1*ſt*, We muſt not expect, that God's particular *Providence* would interpoſe, where our *own Endeavours* are ſufficient. For that would be to encourage Sloth and Idleneſs, inſtead of countenancing and ſupporting Virtue. Nor ought we to expect to be relieved from Difficulties and Diſtreſſes, into which our own Miſmanagement and criminal Conduct have plunged us. But when without any Fault of ours our Affairs are ſo perplexed and intangled, that human Aſſiſtance will be of no Avail; then we muſt have Recourſe to God, that he would give us *Wiſdom* to conduct us through all the Labyrinths and Intricacies of Life, *Reſolution* to *grapple* with Difficulties, and *Strength* to *overcome* them. In this Light

SERM. V.

the Prayer, which *Joſephus* puts into the Mouth of *Moſes*, juſt before his Paſſage through the Red Sea, is very juſt and beautiful. Unpaſſable Rocks barred his Eſcape one Way, the numerous Hoſt of the *Egyptians* blocked up others: Before him ſtood the Red Sea. In this Situation *Moſes*, juſt upon the Brink of Ruin, applies himſelf thus to God: "Lord, thou knoweſt that no "Strength, Wiſdom or Contrivance of "*ours* can here be of any Significancy. It "is in *thy Power alone* to find out a Way "for the Deliverance of this People, who "by thy Command and under thy Con-"duct have left *Egypt*. Deſpairing of all "*other* Ways, we flee to *thee* alone for "Succour; Lord, let it come ſpeedily; "give us a full Proof of thy Almighty "Power and Veracity. We are in great "Straits, great and unſurmountable by *us*; "but to *Thee* ſlight and inconſiderable. "The Sea is thine and it obſtructs our "Progreſs; The Mountains that ſhut us "up, are thine too. Thou canſt divide "this Sea, or turn its Waves into firm "Land, or make us find a ſafe Paſſage "through the Deep *."

* *Joſephi* Opera, Vol. 1. Pag. 90. *Hudſon*'s Edit.

Here

Here was a *Knot* too *hard* for any *but* the *Deity* to unty; and *therefore* the Deity deſcended upon the Scene to unravel the perplexing Difficulty. But in common Caſes the beſt Way is to rely upon Providence, as if all human Endeavours and Reſources were uſeleſs, as indeed they are, without it; and yet to exert our Endeavours as vigorouſly, as if Providence would not interpoſe at all. For God will not *proſtitute* his Power to *ſuperſede* our Endeavours as to what we *can* do: He will only ſupply what we *cannot* do. SERM. V.

2*dly*, We muſt not expect that Providence would ſo far conſult our *private* Intereſt, as to counterwork that of the *whole*. Thoſe general Laws, which are calculated for the *Good* of the *Whole*, may, in *ſome* Caſes, be *detrimental* to ſome *few Perſons*; but, in the *main*, are *beneficial* even to *them*. For if God ſhould, upon no extraordinary Emergency, for no prepollent Good, deviate from his Laws; the utmoſt *Reach* and *Compaſs* of Thought would avail *no more*, than *Childhood* and *Ignorance*: All human *Induſtry* and *Foreſight* would be at a *Stand*, which *depend* on Things going generally on in a *ſtated Track*. For there could be no

SERM. V.

no Room for *Counſel*, Deliberation and *Foreçaſt*, where there was no *orderly Conſtitution*, no *ſettled Courſe* of *Nature*. It would not ſignify to till the Ground, that we might reap the Fruits of the Earth in due Seaſon: There would be no Dependance upon the ebbing and flowing of the Waters at ſet Times, and ſo in a thouſand other Caſes. It is for the Intereſt even of *that* Man, who is uneaſy becauſe the Settlement of Nature is not changed in compliance with his Wiſhes; that God *has given* Things *a Law, which ſhall not be broken* upon every frivolous Occaſion. For if the Deity ſhould depart from his uniform Manner of Acting upon *his* Application in any *material* Point; why ſhould he not do ſo to gratify the Importunity of *other* Perſons? The Conſequence of which would be, we ſhould live in an irregular disjointed World, where there would be no Harmony, no Order, no Law; but all would be Confuſion and Anarchy. God can and does govern the *rational* World, without ſubverting and unhinging the Frame of the *natural*.

3*dly*, We are not to expect that Providence upon our repeated Requeſts would grant what we *imagine* a Bleſſing; there being

being ſeveral Things which we think to be Bleſſings, that are not ſo upon the *Whole*, or not ſo to *us*. And Providence is not like an over-indulgent Parent, who deſtroys the *future Happineſs* of his Children, by complying with their importunate Petitions, and removing their *preſent Uneaſineſs*. SERM. V.

We muſt diſtinguiſh likewiſe between *natural* and *fantaſtic* Wants. Providence has generally made ample Proviſion for the *former*, but not for the *latter*. Beſides thoſe Deſires, which are *inborn*, there are ſeveral, which are *inbred* in us, by early Cuſtom and by a Neglect of Reaſon: Such are thoſe of high and ſumptuous Food, of Honours, and all the *Pride of Life*. Now every regular Inclination, *every Plant which our heavenly Father hath planted*, he will take care, in concurrence with our own Endeavours, to feed and nouriſh. But we ourſelves, if we will not part with them, muſt *maintain* thoſe *ſpurious* and *illegitimate* Deſires, which we have begot in ourſelves. There would be as *exact* an *Adjuſtment* of the *Means* of *Subſiſtence* to the reſpective Wants of the *rational* Creation, as there is to thoſe of the *animal* World; if Men unſatisfied with Neceſſaries and Conveniencies

SERM. V.

veniencies had not *made* Life miſerable by *acquired* Uneaſineſſes and Cravings. In ſhort, we are got into a *World*, in ſome meaſure, as it were of our *own Modelling*, inſtead of having it, as it came *originally* from *God*: We have introduced much Miſery and Diſorder by Luxury, Pride, Ambition, and by unnatural Deſires.

Nor muſt we, *4thly*, hope, that Providence will prevent every Calamity, that may befal good Men. All, that the Aſſertors of a particular Providence contend for, is that, if he does not think fit to prevent it, he will either ſupport them under it, or reſcue them from it; or make all Things, at the laſt Winding up of the Drama, work together for Good to them who love him. To annex worldly Happineſs *conſtantly* and *univerſally* to Virtue, and worldly Miſery to Vice, would lay too great a Biaſs and Reſtraint upon our Inclinations; it would over-rule the Will, and neceſſitate it to be virtuous. This Life would be no State of Probation and Trial: There would be no Temptation to *Vice*, when all the Advantages lay on the Side of Virtue.

II*dly*,

SERM. V.

II*dly*, Having ſtated the Doctrine of a particular Providence, I proceed to prove the Poſſibility of it.

We muſt diſtinguiſh between the *grand* and *fundamental* Laws of Nature; and thoſe of an *inferior* and *ſubordinate* Nature. The Oeconomy of Nature may be in a great meaſure *unalterable*, as to the grand and *fundamental* Laws, by which the Univerſe is ſteered: Such are thoſe reſpecting the *Revolution* of the *heavenly* Bodies, the Succeſſion of *Day* and *Night*, and the Round of the *Seaſons*. But there are *ſubordinate* and *inferior* Laws, which God may alter without any *ſeeming* or *viſible* Alteration. And to recede from them, under proper *Limitations*, *occaſionally*, at the Inſtance of *particular Perſons*, may be *no Detriment* to the *Univerſe*, and yet of great *Importance* to *them*. Such are the Laws relating to the Courſe of *infectious* and peſtilential Vapours, the State of the *Atmoſphere*, &c. Nay, with whatever deciſive Airs Men may talk of God's Government by general Laws; yet, as to *ſome* of theſe Points, ſeveral Matters of Fact are not to be accounted for upon that Scheme. Thus

Serm. V.

for Inſtance, according to *general* Laws, the greater Quantity of Rain *has fallen*, the greater Quantity ſhould *ſtill continue* to fall; becauſe the more Water reſted upon the Ground, and ſwelled the Rivers; the greater Quantity of Vapours muſt be attracted by the Sun, and deſcend again in Showers. And yet this is contrary to Experience. On the contrary, the longer any Drought has continued; the longer, without the Interpoſition of Providence, it ſhould ſtill continue: Becauſe the Ground being parched, and the Rivers either dried up or much ſunk; the Number of Vapours, which are exhaled from thence, muſt be very inconſiderable. All pretended Solutions of this Appearance do but *ſhift off* the Difficulty *one Remove*, without fully obviating it; except we call in the divine Providence, *which giveth the former and the latter Rain*, to our Aid.

God undoubtedly can abate or quicken the Force of Winds, Storms and Lightning; can retard and weaken, or increaſe and accelerate their Influence, without reverſing the ſettled Courſe of Nature in a Manner perceptible to us; ſo as to bring about what he ſees fit, and prevent what he does not think

think ſo. We ourſelves very often, within the limited Sphere of our Activity, ſtop or haſten the Motion of Bodies, or change their Direction. And ſhall we deny the Exertion of that Power to the *great Creator*, which the *meaneſt of his Creatures* is inveſted with? May he not clog or quicken the Wheels, and direct the Springs of natural Cauſes, ſo that *Wind and Storm* may *fulfil his Word?*

The Deity muſt *proportion* his Care to the *intrinſic* Worth of the *Object*. Now one Being, who is ennobled with the diſtinguiſhing Perfections of *Reaſon and Liberty*, is of more Value, than the *whole* Maſs of *Matter*, how vaſt ſoever in Extent. He will therefore have a greater Regard for rational Beings in proportion to the ſuperior Excellency of their Nature. God *made* the *material* World intirely *for* the *ſpiritual*; and conſequently will *govern* it with *Regard* to the latter: The material World being but the *mere Shell*, which was formed and beautified for the *Sake* of its *Inhabitants*. This would incline one to think, that God is not ſo *tied up* to general Laws, as to have *no Reſerve of Power* left to himſelf, to provide for particular Exigencies.

But

SERM. V.

But ſuppoſing he ſeldom or never ſwerves from his ſtated Method of Acting, yet the *particular* Occurrences of each Man's Life may be directed by a Power *delegated to Angels*, and that too, *conſiſtently with the eſtabliſhed Courſe of Nature*. This Suppoſition is confirmed by ſeveral Texts of Scripture. Thus we read in the ſecond Book of *Chronicles* xvi. 9. *The Eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole Earth, to ſhew himſelf* (it ſhould be rendered *themſelves*) *ſtrong in the Behalf of them, whoſe Heart is perfect towards him.* That by the *Eyes of the Lord* is here meant the *Angels of God*, is plain from St. *John*, who mentions *Revel.* v. 6. *the ſeven Eyes which are the ſeven Spirits* or Angels *of God ſent forth into all the Earth.* The Pſalmiſt expreſsly ſays, *The Angel of the Lord encampeth about them that fear him, and delivereth them.*

We ſee, that as the Scale of Beings deſcends *downwards* from Man to Brutes, from Brutes to Inſects, from Inſects to Plants; the *higher* Beings in each Link of the Chain have ſome kind of Dominion and viſible Authority over their immediate *Inferiors*: Man for Inſtance over Animals,

Animals, and Animals over Plants. And from that Harmony which runs through all God's Works, we may conclude, that as the Scale aſcends *upwards* from Man to Angels; *they* too have ſome Power and Influence over *us*; as we have over Brutes, and Brutes over thoſe of a lower Species. SERM. V.

If it be aſked, why in puniſhing the Wicked, in curbing and over-ruling their Actions, ſo that they ſhall not be able to go beyond the Will of God *to do leſs or more*; and in protecting, chaſtiſing or trying the Good, God does not always act immediately; it may be ſufficient to anſwer, that as God does not exert a *ſupernatural* Power, where an *human* is ſufficient; ſo He may never put forth his *Omnipotence*, where an *Angelical* Power is equal to the Effect to be produced; or in other Words, he may never uſe *more* Power or *greater* Means, than it was *requiſite*. *The Angels of God are miniſtring Spirits, ſent forth to miniſter for them, who ſhall be Heirs of Salvation.*

Let us ſuppoſe that a Perſon, whom God deſigns to be the Inſtrument of promoting the Happineſs of the World before he dies, has an Intention to go ſome Way, where Aſſaſſins lay in wait for him, or to

SERM. V.

paſs by a Building, which is ruinous and ready to fall *. It is not neceſſary, that God ſhould abſolutely deſtroy the Liberty of free Agents, or ſuſpend the Force of Gravitation: He may, by the Miniſtry of Angels, lay ſeveral Impediments in his Way, give him a different Turn of Thinking, ſuggeſt ſeveral Reaſons, why it may be proper to defer his intended Journey, or put him upon taking a different Road, or over-rule his Intentions. A thouſand Impreſſions may be made upon him, in this or any other Caſe, when imminent Danger threatens him, to alter his Purpoſe. However *fixed* and *determined* ſome may ſuppoſe the *Laws*, by which the *material* World is governed, to be; the *Mind* of Man at leaſt is *changeable* and *capable* of *new* Determinations: And God, in whoſe *Hand the* HEART of Man is, *as the Rivers of Water, and who turneth it, whitherſoever he liſteth*, may change it by ſecret Influences, and by making Things appear in another Light, than they did. Or he may render the *Hand* of the Ruffian *unperforming*, by ſtriking a *Terror* into his *Heart*, at the *Inſtant*, that he meditates the Blow.

* See *Wollaſton*'s Religion of Nature, Page 99, and 106, 1ſt Edit.

Or

Or there may be ſeveral Ways above our Underſtanding, by which God may ſuit his Providence to *private* Caſes, where the Courſe of Things goes on in a regular Channel without overflowing.

This is certain, that though ſeveral Things may *ſeem accidental* to us, who are ignorant of their true Cauſes; yet *nothing* is *accidental* to the *Deity*, to whoſe View every Cauſe, how minute ſoever, that lies hid in the Depth of Futurity, is unlocked and expoſed. And, what we *miſcal Chance*, *Fate* or *Fortune* in our Language here below; they, who ſpeak *another Language above*, more agreeable to the Truth and Reaſon of Things, call the wiſe *Diſpenſations* of an *all-directing Providence*. Fortune and Chance are but Words to ſignify our Ignorance: The *Scripture* teacheth us a more *juſt* Manner of expreſſing ourſelves, as for Inſtance; *The Lot is caſt into the Lap; but the whole Diſpoſing thereof is of the Lord.* What *appears* a *Caſualty* to us, is here referred to the *Diſpoſal* of the ſupreme *Diſpenſer of Good and Evil.* And again, when the eleven Apoſtles were to chuſe another into the Room of *Judas* by *Lot*, they aſcribe the *Direction of the Af-*

SERM. V.

fair to God's unerring *Providence*, though it was managed by *Casting of Lots: Thou, Lord, who knowest the Hearts of all Men, shew, whether of these two thou hast chosen.* Whatever is seemingly effected by the Ministry of second Causes, God so lays, directs and conducts the Train of Events, as to serve his own beneficial Purposes. The Scripture very fully and expressly asserts a particular Providence: *God holdeth our Soul in Life: He is a very present Help in Trouble: The very Hairs of our Head are all numbered: Not a Sparrow falls to the Ground without the Deity:* Nothing being so small and inconsiderable, as to *escape* his infinite *Knowledge:* Nothing so *great* or unwieldy, as to *encumber* his Almighty *Power.*

Still this Objection may be advanced: We may suppose two Men equally Good, equally the Care of Providence, begging at the same Time, the one for an Eastern Wind, the other for a Western, as most commodious for his Voyage. How can God's Providence gratify Both, when their Requests are contrary? To which I answer, that, though God cannot gratify Both, by granting their particular Requests, which interfere,

interfere, becauſe he cannot do what implies a Contradiction; yet he may conſult the *Intereſt and Advantage* of *Both:* He may be equally gracious in what he *withholds from* the one, as in what he *vouchſafeth to* the other. He may make an Incident, however contrary to his Wiſhes, turn out upon the Whole to his Benefit, by an unexpected Train of Occurrences, by ſecret and unſuſpected Methods. In the Caſe of *two contrary* and claſhing *Petitions*, God will do what is for the Good of the *Whole*; but ſo, as that the *particular* Good of each Individual, who prays affectionately, means well and acts up to that Meaning, ſhall coincide with the general Plan. Nay if the ſtormy Wind, which he deprecates, ſhould ariſe and ſink him in the Deep; yet it may bring him to a far more valuable Haven, *the Haven where he would be*, the Land of everlaſting Reſt.

But can God, you will ſay, behold the Things that are in Heaven and in Earth, and with one comprehenſive View command the whole Compaſs of the Univerſe? Yes, *He, that made the Eye, ſhall he not ſee; and He, that made the Ear, ſhall he not hear? Or he that teacheth Man Know-*

SERM. V.

ledge, ſhall he not know? Conſider that *He* inveſted you with the *Faculty* of *Knowing and Thinking:* And can you ſtupidly imagine, that what you know and think *by* and *from him*, can eſcape *his* Thoughts and Knowledge? Look upon that glorious Luminary the Sun: Its Light flies ſwift as Thought from one Part of the Univerſe to the other; it penetrates into every Corner, and *nothing is hid from the Heat thereof.* And can you think, that the *Knowledge* of the *Deity* does not extend much farther, and penetrate deeper, than the *Light* of that Body, which is the Work of his Hands? It is as certain that God ſeeth us and all our Actions, as that he giveth us the Power of ſeeing. Fain would we imagine him *far from us*; though even ſpontaneous Motion be a Proof of his immediate Preſence. The Soul wills the Motion of the Hand and Foot, and they immediately move obedient to its Orders. Yet the Soul has no more a Power, independently of its Maker, to move its Limbs by a mere Thought; than it has a Power to move the Sun, Moon, and Stars, by merely willing it: And He, who has made the former conſequent upon our Volition, might have made the latter

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ſo too by his Almighty Power. The Jews, as we learn from *Maimonides*, waved their Sacrifice upwards and downwards, North and South, Eaſt and Weſtward, to intimate that the Being, to whom they conſecrated their Sacrifice, was every where a Being, whom no Place could *confine*, and none *exclude* *. SERM. V.

Let us then leave it to him, who alone is equal to the mighty Province, to adjuſt in ſuch a Manner the various *interfering* Intereſts of Mankind in *general*, and to conſult the *private* Caſes of each *Individual*; that every Man, who makes it his Buſineſs to recommend himſelf to God, may find his Happineſs over-balance his Miſery.

But this brings me to my III*d* Head, *viz.* to prove the Truth and Certainty of a particular Providence.

1*ſt*, That the Deity ſhould not grant every particular good Man, what is really for *his Good* upon the *Whole*, and no ways inconſiſtent with that of the *Public*; muſt either argue, that he is *unwilling*, or that he is *unable* to grant it. Infinite *Goodneſs* cannot but be *willing* to communicate *Happineſs* to every Individual, who is not want-

* See *Outram de Sacrificiis*, Page 162.

ledge, ſhall he not know? Conſider that *He* inveſted you with the *Faculty* of *Knowing and Thinking:* And can you ſtupidly imagine, that what you know and think *by* and *from him*, can eſcape *his* Thoughts and Knowledge? Look upon that glorious Luminary the Sun: Its Light flies ſwift as Thought from one Part of the Univerſe to the other; it penetrates into every Corner, and *nothing is hid from the Heat thereof.* And can you think, that the *Knowledge* of the *Deity* does not extend much farther, and penetrate deeper, than the *Light* of that Body, which is the Work of his Hands? It is as certain that God ſeeth us and all our Actions, as that he giveth us the Power of ſeeing. Fain would we imagine him *far from us*; though even ſpontaneous Motion be a Proof of his immediate Preſence. The Soul wills the Motion of the Hand and Foot, and they immediately move obedient to its Orders. Yet the Soul has no more a Power, independently of its Maker, to move its Limbs by a mere Thought; than it has a Power to move the Sun, Moon, and Stars, by merely willing it: And He, who has made the former conſequent upon our Volition, might have made the latter

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* See *Outram de Sacrificiis*, Page 162.

ing to himself; and infinite *Power* cannot but be *able* to bring about, whatever his Goodness wills.

Let us suppose a Man combating with some *uncommon* Distress, to which his *Strength* is greatly *unequal*; let us suppose, that this Man, who has *regarded* God during the main Tenor of his Life, according to the *best* of his Abilities, now *implores him* with all the *Energy* of Devotion, as his *last*, his *only Refuge*. Can we imagine, that *the Father of Comforts and the God of Mercy* will stand *looking* upon his Trouble; without either vouchsafing to him any *outward* Assistance, which *he* can easily do in an unperceived Manner, to whom *all Nature* is *subservient*; or communicating to him any *inward* Consolation, though he knows each Avenue to the Soul? He may not think fit entirely to *remove* his Misfortune; but he will either *lessen* or *abate* it, so that he shall not *be tempted above what he is able*; or he will adjust his Succour to his Exigency.

2*dly*, God will *respect* and treat every Man *agreeably* to *what* he *is*; and therefore there can be *no irrespective* Course of Things. *Matter* and *Motion* are very *undistinguishing*;

SERM. V.

diſtinguiſhing: they make no Difference between *him that ſerveth God, and Him that ſerveth him not:* But *God* doth: For no good Man, I believe, ever prayed conſtantly and affectionately to his Maker, without having an *Experience*, that God has *anſwered* his Prayers at ſome *nice* and *critical* Conjuncture. If all Things happen according to the Laws of Mechaniſm, by a fixed *Chain* of natural Cauſes, without any Act of a *reſpective* Providence, without any Superintendency and *Direction of Events*; then we live, to all Appearance, in a *fatherleſs* World, liable to a thouſand Dangers, Caſualties and Diſtreſſes, which no Foreſight can prevent, no Skill elude, no Power fence off. It is an Impeachment of God's Goodneſs to ſuppoſe, that as ſoon as he has made any Man, he diſmiſſes him immediately out of his Hands, and abandons him, without a Deſign to anſwer his Prayers, or take any farther Notice of Him in his Paſſage through this World, or to accommodate the Diſpenſations of Providence to his Wants and Deportment.

3*dly*, Inſtinct is a Proof, that Providence extends itſelf to every *particular Brute*; Inſtinct being the immediate Ener-

gy of the Deity acting upon each of the Brute Creation. For it operates, as ſoon as Animals are *born:* As ſoon as they make their Entrance upon this new Scene, the World, they do *not* act as mere *Strangers:* They ſeem to be *acquainted* with the Food that is beneficial to them, and to ſhun what is dangerous. A defenceleſs Brood, when Danger threatens, take Shelter under the Wings of their Parent; while another Brood, though hatched under the ſame Fowl, runs to the Water, regardleſs of the affectionate Cries and tender Yearnings of their *Foſter-Mother*, which would call them away from an Element, which it thinks deſtructive to them. Now, what we call Inſtinct, cannot be the Reſult of *mere Matter and Motion:* For undirected *Matter and Motion* cannot *ſhun Danger*, and *purſue* what is *advantageous*. It cannot be the Effect of *Reaſon* in the Creatures *themſelves:* For Reaſon is an *Acquiſition*, and Men ripen into rational Beings by a *progreſſive Opening* and Unfolding of the Mind. Reaſon is an *improveable* Faculty, in its *Nonage* for ſeveral Years; and our *Souls*, as well as *Bodies*, come *naked* into the World and *unfurniſhed*. *Inſtinct* muſt be then, as I ſaid

ſaid before, the *divine Energy* acting immediately upon the Animal Creation: It muſt be his Power, *who giveth Fodder to the Cattle, and feedeth the young Ravens that call upon him.*

Beſides, every Species of Brutes obſerves a *peculiar Track:* They go on in a *Line* without deviating from it; Inſtinct does that by *one unvarying* Method, which Reaſon does by *ſeveral:* They obſerve the ſame Plan in the Structure of their Neſts, even thoſe, which had never ſeen one before: Whereas if they had Reaſon, they would *vary* as much in their Schemes, as *we* do; they would project *new* Plans and *improve old* ones. And whereas rational Creatures can correct the Reports of the Senſes, and over-rule their Solicitations; Brutes are entirely governed by natural *Impulſes,* and by the *Prompting* of the *ſenſitive* Appetites.

Now if Providence condeſcends to regard every *Individual* in the *Brute* Creation ſo far, as to act conſtantly in it and upon it; ſhall he not *much more* extend his Care to every *particular* Perſon in the *rational* World, and adapt his Diſpenſations to the Neceſſities of each ſingle Perſon in it: *Conſider*

SERM. V.

ſider the Fowls of the Air; for they ſow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into Barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them: Are ye not much better than They? He, whoſe overflowing Bounty has ſupplied the Birds of the Air and the Beaſts of the Field with whatever is ſuitable to *their* Natures, will provide for Mankind in a Way ſuited to the Condition of the *rational* Nature. *He openeth his Hand, and filleth all Things living with Plenteouſneſs:* And ſhall he not anſwer the various Occaſions and Circumſtances of Man, the Maſter-piece of the viſible Creation?

4*thly*, Thoſe who admit a *general* Providence, but deny a *particular* one, ſeem to forget that *Generals* are nothing but a *Collection of Particulars*; they are nothing but the *Sum total* of Individuals. And conſequently as Generals *include* Particulars; a *general* Providence muſt *imply* a *particular* one. If the *Whole* of worldly Affairs and Concerns be the *univerſal Chain* of Providence; then each Man's *private* Concerns are *one* Link of that Chain which is affixed to the Throne and directed by the unerring Hand of God. Whatever *other* Laws, by which the World is governed, there

there may be; the *ſupreme* Law, to which all the reſt muſt give way, is the *Intereſt* of the *Whole*: And the Intereſt of the *Whole* cannot be promoted without a conſtant Regard to the *Parts*, of which the whole is compoſed. Now if a *fixed*, determined and *unchangeable* Courſe of Nature could be made to correſpond to the *various* Intereſts and Exigencies of *free* and *mutable* Agents; there would be no Occaſion for any Interpoſition of the Deity, who may have made Proviſion for particular Caſes in his original Conſtitution of Things. But if this be, as perhaps it is, impoſſible, if many beneficial Events of the higheſt Importance may be brought about, and much *needleſs* Miſery ſometimes prevented by a particular *Direction* of Matter, which cannot, of itſelf, change its Line of Direction; it is derogatory, one would think, to God's Goodneſs to imagine, that He would, *merely* for the Sake of acting *ſimply* and *uniformly*, without any other End in View, make *Mankind* or any *Part* of Mankind undeſervedly and *unneceſſarily* unhappy; or, that He, who can order Matters ſo, that his *Footſteps* ſhall *not be known*, ſhould never go *out* of the *common Road* of his Providence to avert Evil and

SERM. V.

and produce ſome conſiderable Good, which could not *otherwiſe* be produced. There muſt be then an Adjuſtment of the State of the *natural* World to that of the *rational* and intelligent Creation. All the Arguments, which prove that God governs the World in *general* in a Manner which ſuits beſt with *Reaſon*, prove likewiſe that he takes care of *particular* Caſes in the *ſame* Manner. For God can no more act *contrary* to *Reaſon* in any *particular* Caſe, than he can in *general* do ſo. The *Time*, the *Manner* and *Condition* of each Man's Exiſtence muſt be determined by Him, upon whom each Man's *Exiſtence* depends; which cannot be done without *deſcending* to *Particulars*.

5*thly*, The ſurpriſing Diſcoveries of Murder, the Fall of the Wicked into the Pit, which they made for others; the ſtrange and judicial *Infatuation* of Men *wiſe* at all *other* Times, when ſome great Event was to be brought about, which can only be reſolved into his Power, who maketh the *Knowledge of the Wiſe fooliſh, and turneth their Counſels backwards*; the Indiſcretion of others ſucceeding, when well-concerted Plots have failed; the *Diſpro-*

portion

portion of the *viſible Means* to the Effect; theſe are ſo many Arguments to prove a particular Providence at the Helm, who has a perfect View of all Things, whether great or ſmall, at all Times, and in all Places, with infinitely more Eaſe, than we can attend to one Thing at once.

There is great Reaſon to think, that God often breaks the fine-ſpun Threads of human Policy, and brings the moſt unpromiſing Projects to bear. Were the Soul diveſted of the Body; ſhe might find herſelf as much miſtaken about ſeveral Turns of Affairs; as the *Trojan* Hero was, who was enraged at the *Grecians*, whom he thought the *ſole* Authors of his Country's Ruin: But when the *Miſt* was *removed* which dimmed his mortal Sight, he ſaw the Deſtruction of the City, in which he thought *human* Agents were only concerned, was cauſed by Beings of a much *ſuperior Nature*.

We have a pregnant Inſtance in Scripture, that God vouchſafed to ſit at the Helm of the Jewiſh State. For when all the Males three times a Year were obliged to go to the Temple at *Jeruſalem*, and conſequently left the Frontiers of their Country

SERM. V.

Country unguarded; what could hinder their Enemies, (and no Nation had more Enemies,) who uſed to *defy the Armies of the living God*, from making a Deſcent upon a *naked* and *defenceleſs* Country? What, but He, who in the Language of Scripture *boweth the Hearts of a* WHOLE *Nation, as the Heart of* ONE *Man?* When God has ſome great Deſign in View, He giveth one *univerſal Bent* of Inclination to a whole People with the ſame Eaſe, with which a *Guſt* of *Wind inclines* all the *Tops* of Corn in a waving Field *the ſame Way*.

This, you will ſay, is only a Proof of a national Providence; it facilitates, however, our Belief of a Providence extending to each Individual. What follows, directly proves it, as to the *better* Part of us, our *Souls*. God is every where preſent; and to ſuppoſe that an infinitely good Being can be inviſibly preſent to the Soul, without awakening in it pure and virtuous Notices, and exciting it to the Purſuit of Piety, not indeed by irreſiſtible Force, but by rational Motives, would be to entertain a worſe Notion of an *all-gracious God*, than we do of a *pious Man*. For any good Man, who is continually preſent with us, will be

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ſuggeſting advantageous Rules for the Conduct of Life, if he hath our eternal Intereſt at Heart. The Philoſophy now in vogue allows, that God continually acts upon Matter; and that whatever Motion there is in the great Bodies of the Univerſe, is owing to his immediate Operation. But if God acts continually and immediately upon *Matter*; it will be hard to aſſign any ſufficient Reaſon, why he ſhould not act upon, what is much *nobler* than Matter, the *ſpiritual* World. SERM. V.

There are very few, who have not, ſome Time or other, juſt as they were upon the *Point* of perpetrating a *bad* Action, felt a *ſudden Check* or *Reſtraint* upon them, which has rendered their Deſign abortive. Something, they knew not what, at that very *Criſis*, when, if they had gone a *Step* farther, it had been *too late* to retreat, hath *withheld* them from *ſinning*. A chill Fearfulneſs and Trembling hath come upon them that were Strangers to Fear; and an unuſual Damp hath overcaſt the Soul which had been inured to hardy Attempts. When any *good* Suggeſtion, without any *antecedent* Train of Ideas ariſeth in our Minds, we know not how or from what

SERM. V. Quarter, we ought to look upon it as a *Beam of Light* darting in upon our Minds from the great *Father of Lights*; and let us improve, cultivate and ripen it, till it breaks forth into correſpondent Actions.

IV*thly*, I ſhall make two or three Reflections, and ſo conclude.

1*ſt*, Let us learn from hence to form the moſt auguſt Ideas of the *divine* Nature, of which *ours* is capable.

Look how wide and ſpacious this *Earth* is, on which we live: Yet this Earth is as it were but one *petty Province* of God's *univerſal Empire*, one *little Wheel* of the *vaſt Machine*, the whole World. How aſtoniſhingly *great* then is that Being who ſets each Wheel in Motion, and regulates the whole Circumference of the Creation; where *there are Diverſities of Adminiſtrations, but the ſame God, which worketh All in All?* It is his *Power*, which wields *ſo many maſſy Bodies*, and bids the *Planets* go their *everlaſting Round*; it is his *Wiſdom*, which adjuſts *ſuch Variety* of Movements without the *leaſt Confuſion*; it is *Goodneſs*, which has *enriched* the Univerſe with ſuch a *Profuſion* of Good, *beautified* it with

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ſuch *Order and Harmony*, and *ennobled* it with ſuch *Magnificence* and Grandeur. SERM. V.

Yet this Earth, all theſe Worlds, which move above us, far more, than the naked Eye, than Glaſſes, than the *Imagination* can reach, are but before him (in the Language of the Prophet *Iſaiah*) *as a Drop of a Bucket, and are counted as the ſmall Duſt of the Balance: Behold he taketh up the Iſles, as a very little Thing:* That is, the Iſles, and indeed the whole Univerſe, are in *his* Hands, what a *light* inſignificant *Weight* is in *ours*, which we *take up* and manage *at our Eaſe*, without being in the leaſt encumbered by it. What is your Spirit amidſt ſuch a Multitude of Spirits, as probably inhabit theſe Worlds? No more, than a Drop amidſt the vaſt Collection and Aſſemblage of Waters.—Yet you are as much the Care of the great Author of all theſe Worlds, and Father of all theſe Spirits, as if there were no Creature for him to protect and love but you. No Perſon howſoever little or inſignificant, who *regards* him, can be *unregarded* by Him, who, with one *Glance of Thought* can *know every* Thing, without Study and painful Reſearches; and with one *Motion of his Will* can *do*

Serm. V.

every Thing, without Toil or laborious Efforts. He hath *preſerved* your *Going out, and your Coming in,* comforting you in Troubles, directing you in Difficulties, ſaving you from ſeveral Dangers, which you know nothing of, and conducting you through this Maze of Life.

2*dly*, Inſtead of ſcaring yourſelf with melancholy Views, and letting your *Heart fail* you *for Fear, and for looking after thoſe Things, that are to come upon the Earth,* when Wickedneſs and Irreligion prevail; let it be a Matter of Joy and Comfort to you, that amidſt all the Confuſion and Madneſs of the World, Men cannot faſter *perplex* and *entangle Things,* than *God* can *unravel* them; or *embroil* the World, than he can bring *Order out* of Confuſion; that the Wicked are under the ſecret Controul of his Providence; that *the Lord is King, be the People never ſo impatient; he ſitteth between the Cherubims, be the Earth never ſo unquiet*; that he can make the Machinations of wicked Men an *accidental* Occaſion of *Good,* and ſerve *his* gracious Deſigns, in Oppoſition to their *own.*

Laſtly, let us never do any Thing to

throw ourſelves out of his Protection. Let us conſider how *vain* all *Schemes* of *Happineſs* are, out of which *He*, the *Fountain Head* of Happineſs, is left, who can daſh the Joys of Proſperity with ſuch unpalatable Ingredients, as render them no Joys at all; and qualify the Bitterneſs of Poverty with ſuch Infuſions of Joy and Gladneſs, as ſhall make it eaſy and tolerable. And perhaps He, who *made* the Soul, can *alone* make it *thoroughly happy or miſerable:* He can *pierce* it *through and through* with *Sorrow* and *Pain*, and make it, when *incorrigibly bad*, *irretrievably wretched*; or he can pervade it and *fill* the *whole Capacity* of it with *unconceivable Bliſs*. Then, and not till then, we are intirely undone, when God has *caſt out our Soul*, caſt it from his Preſence, from the Comforts of his Preſence. For his Preſence is every where: But it is to the Good and the Wicked, juſt what it was to the *Iſraelites and Egyptians* before the Red Sea: To the former a *Pillar of Light* to brighten up every Thing around them; to the latter a *Cloud* and *Darkneſs* to *trouble* and diſquiet them. While we enjoy the Light of the divine Countenance, we need not be dejected at the Frowns of the

SERM. V.

whole World. For *if God be* FOR *us*, it will in a short Time signify little or nothing, who was *against* us: But if He be *against* us, what will it signify, who was *for* us? Our Communication and *Intercourse* with our *nearest* and dearest *Relations* may be intercepted by our *Misfortunes*: But our *Intercourse* with the *nearest* Object of *all*, even *Him, in whom we live, and move, and have our Being*, cannot be intercepted but by our *Vices*. He who never *faileth them that seek him*, will never *forsake us*, till we forsake *Him* and *Virtue*. He is, according to the expressive Description of St. *John*, *Light and Love*, pure unclouded Light, without any Mixture of Darkness and Ignorance; and pure unallayed Love, without any Tincture of Malice and Hatred; He knows whatever is really Good for us; and will do whatever in his unerring Judgment is most effectually conducive to our Good, making every disastrous Incident finally terminate in our Benefit.

SERMON VI.

The intrinsic Excellency of the Scriptures, a Proof of their divine Inspiration.

In Two SERMONS.

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1 PETER III. 15.

Be ready always to give an Answer to every Man that asketh you a Reason of the Hope that is in you.

SERM. VI.

IT is surprising to observe, what a close Connexion and Alliance one material Truth has with another. Thus, for Instance, that there is a God, those manifest Traces of infinite Wisdom, which appear through the whole Oeconomy of Nature, sufficiently make out. The whole World is in this respect, as it were, one great Temple, where, as in the Jewish, the Shechinah, or divine Presence shines

Serm. VI.

confest in a visible Glory. The same Arguments, that prove our own Existence, demonstrate God's. How do we prove there is a vital Principle within any Person? Why, because he moves, he thinks and acts: And can we from these Operations conclude there subsists within us a Principle, which actuates and informs the Body: And shall we not from the stupendous Operations of the Universe conclude, there is a Being that actuates and invigorates all *Nature* * ? Matter cannot be a necessarily existent Being. Because that alone is *necessarily* existent, which exists *immutably*, and cannot *but* be what it is. Whereas, on the other hand, Matter does not persist in an *uniform* State of Being, but is liable to *Changes*, and admits of new Modi-

* Est, est profecto illa Vis: neque in his Corporibus, atque in hac imbecillitate inest quiddam quod vigeat ac sentiat: et non inest in hoc tanto Naturæ tam præclaro motu; nisi forte idcirco esse non putant, quia non apparet, nec cernitur: proinde quasi nostram ipsam mentem, quâ sapimus, quâ providemus, quâ hæc ipsa agimus ac dicimus, videre, aut plane qualis, aut ubi sit, sentire possumus. *Cicero pro Milone.* Unde scis tibi inesse vitale Principium? Respondebis, quia loquor, quia ambulo, quia operor. Stulte, ex operibus corporis agnoscis viventem; ex operibus Creationis non agnoscis Creatorem? *S. Augustinus.*

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fications. The infinite *Variety*, that there is in the World, which ſhews a *manifold Wiſdom*, is no more conſiſtent with the Scheme of unintelligent *Neceſſity*; than *Regularity*, Uniformity and Deſign is with that of *Chance*.

And if there be a God, there muſt be ſome Religion; or, in other Words, ſome Homage muſt be due from an indigent and dependent Creature, to his great Creator, Preſerver and Benefactor. And if ſome Religion be neceſſary, it muſt be one that is ſufficient, or is ſufficiently calculated for the Generality of Mankind. Now, that natural Religion, or that Religion, which the Light of Nature dictates, is not ſufficiently calculated for the Generality of Mankind, is evident from hence; that to trace a conſiderable Number of Doctrines up to the Fountain-Head from which they flow, by the Strength of unaſſiſted Reaſon, and to purſue them to their remoteſt Conſequences, is a Taſk at leaſt extremely *difficult* to Men of *Letters*, but I may venture to ſay *impracticable* to the *Ignorant*. Beſides, pure natural Religion is a mere *Utopian* Scheme, which may perhaps have exiſted in the Minds of ſome few recluſe contemplative

plative Men, but was never in fact established in any one Nation from the Foundation of the World to the present Times. As certain as it is, that there is a God; so certainly must he will the Belief and Practice of *some* Religion: The Belief of some Religion, and a Practice conformable to that Belief, being *necessary* to the Good of Mankind. And as certainly as he wills the Belief and Practice of *some* Religion; he must will the Belief and Practice of the *best* Religion: And what Religion is there, that *equals* or rivals the *Christian* Revelation?

Such Reflections, as these, enable us, in some measure, to act in conformity to the Apostle's Advice; they make us *ready to give an Answer to every Man that asketh us a Reason of the Hope*, or, as the Word here signifies, of the Faith, *that is in us*.

I should enter into too spacious a Field, if I attempted to do Justice to all the Proofs of Revelation: It shall therefore be my Business at present to dwell upon that Argument, which may be drawn from the intrinsic Excellency of revealed Religion.

In the Prosecution of which Design,

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SERM. VI.

I*ſt*, I ſhall conſider the intrinſic Excellency of revealed Religion, as to the Manifeſtations of the divine Nature.

II*dly*, As to the beautiful Plan of Morality which is laid down in Scripture, together with the Motives and Encouragements, by which it has ſupported and enforced that Plan.

III*dly*, I ſhall conſider the Force of the Argument which may be drawn from theſe Particulars.

I*ſt*, I ſhall conſider the intrinſic Excellency of revealed Religion, as to the Manifeſtations of the divine Nature.

That God is *Love*, or an inexhauſtible Fountain of Goodneſs: That *of Him* as the great Creator, *through Him* as the great Preſerver, and *to Him* as the End and Center, *all Things are*; that he entitles himſelf I AM, the Being who exiſts abſolutely and emphatically, in oppoſition to the fleeting and precarious Exiſtence of his Creatures, which ſcarce deſerves the Name, in compariſon with his; that *a thouſand Years are with him as one Day, and one Day as a thouſand Years:* That he only ſaid, *Let there be Light, and there was Light*, that whatever he commands, is finiſhed by his commanding

manding it; are some of the noblest Ideas that we can conceive of the noblest Being that is. In these Expressions there is that *natural* and *unlaboured*, yet *great* and *noble Simplicity*, which *surpasseth* the *Refinements* of Stile and *ambitious Ornaments* of profane Writers: Just as there is a *native* Beauty in the Lily, which *our heavenly Father has cloathed*; that exceeded the *artificial* Pride of Dress, in which *Solomon* appeared, *when arrayed in all his Glory*. Such Thoughts are ennobled by themselves, and dignified by their own inward Merit, without any need of external Pomp to embellish them. At other Times the sacred Writers deliver themselves with all the Heightnings of Oratory, as particularly *Job*, when he is describing the infinite Power of God, and St. *Paul*, when he is setting forth the Love of the Deity manifested in the Redemption of Man: Not that they affected Eloquence; but when the Spirit of God came upon them, and impregnated their Minds with great Ideas; they naturally broke out into such lofty and corresponding Expressions, as might be a proper Cloathing for their Thoughts: As when our Saviour was transfigured, and his Face shone as the Sun; his Raiment too became as white as Snow.

That

That *the Heavens declare the Glory of God, and the Firmament ſheweth his Handy-work*, &c.—That *he that made the Eye, ſhall he not ſee? He that planted the Ear, ſhall he not hear?* &c.—That the *Heaven, and the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain God*; much leſs the Temple built by *Solomon*.——That the Deity wields and governs the whole Expanſe of the *material* Creation as *a very little Thing, as the Drop of a Bucket, or the Duſt of a Balance*; and that he can turn *the Hearts of* the whole *intellectual* World, as *the Heart of one* Man.—Theſe, with ſeveral others, are Paſſages which would be highly admired in a *Claſſic* Writer; but, *unhappily* for *them*, they are read with Coldneſs and Indifference; becauſe they are in a *Book*, which it is too *faſhionable* to *depreciate*. For though Men pretend to think for themſelves; yet not one in a thouſand does ſo; no not even in judging of Books: They are governed by no fixed Standard in the Judgments which they form; but applaud or condemn according to the prevailing Mode and Faſhion of the Age, in which they live. Otherwiſe, *Moſes*, the Author of *Job*, *David*, *Iſaiah*, and St. *Paul* would have had

SERM. VI.

as many Admirers as Readers; Authors, who seem to have imitated none before them; and whom none after them have been able to imitate, or reach their sublime Strains of Eloquence.

Those Authors in dead Languages, who are looked upon as the most *finished Models* of good Writing, would suffer so much by a *literal* Version, that we should not have the Patience to peruse them with Attention; yet the Scriptures have been rendered Word for Word with the most scrupulous Exactness: And if, notwithstanding this, they deservedly claim our highest Admiration; it is a Proof that they have in them that *Energy* of *Beauty*, which *no Dress*, howsoever disadvantageous, can intirely *conceal* or disfigure. They must have that *solid Sense* and *Substance*, which, like *true Gold*, can never be *lost* or evaporate, however *melted down* and *dissolved*; but still retains its *former Weight*. Some Writers may have painted Things *more finely* and *delicately* than they have done: But none have imaged them so *strongly* and *nervously*.

Observe, what a wide Difference there is between two Passages in the Psalms, and in *Plato* on the same Subject. That, which

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is in *Plato*, is as follows: "Though you "could ſink into the deepeſt Caverns of "the Earth, though you had Wings and "could fly up to the Heights of Heaven; "whether you continue in this World, or "remove to Hell, or to ſome Place more "terrible; the Divine Providence would "ſeize you every where *." Thus the great *Plato*, who confeſſedly wrote with the nobleſt Elevation of Thought on divine Subjects: But how infinitely ſhort doth this fall of that Paſſage in the Pſalms which he ſeems to have had in View? *Whither ſhall I go then from thy Spirit; or whither ſhall I go then from thy Preſence? If I climb up into Heaven, thou art there: If I go down to Hell, thou art there alſo: If I take the Wings of the Morning, and remain in the uttermoſt Parts of the Sea; even there alſo thy Hand ſhall lead me, and thy right Hand ſhall hold me. If I ſay, peradventure the Darkneſs ſhall cover me, then ſhall my Night be turned to Day: Yea, the Darkneſs is no Darkneſs with thee; but the Night is as clear as the Day: The Darkneſs and Light to thee are both alike.* SERM. VI.

* Plato de Legibus, Lib. II.

SERM. VI.

If *Plato* imitated the Psalmist, his Copy is unequal to the Original: It is like a *secondary* Rainbow, the faint *Reflection* of the *first*; where, though the Colours be agreeable, yet they are not so lively, glowing and distinct, as they are at *first* Hand in *that*, which *compasseth the Heaven with a glorious Circle*, and which *the Hands of the Most High have bended*.

Pretenders to a fine Taste may extol that Passage in *Virgil*, where he says, * *Night involved in its Shade Heaven and Earth and the Frauds of the Grecians*; who are not affected by a much nobler Beauty, though of the same kind in the Psalmist, viz. *God stilleth the raging of the Sea, and the Noise of his Waves, and the Madness of the People?* In both Places, there is an unforced and unaffected, yet a striking and surprizing Assemblage of Ideas. In the former, Heaven, Earth and the Frauds of the *Grecians*; in the latter, the Raging of the Sea and the Madness of the People, are naturally, yet unexpectedly put together. But the latter Passage, besides this Beauty, is recommended by the noble Sentiment,

* ——Involvens umbrâ terramque, polumque,
Myrmidonumque dolos.—— *Virgilii Æneidos* Lib. II.

which

which it conveys. The wiſeſt Stateſmen, when the Populace is in a Ferment; juſt as the ableſt Pilots, when the Sea rageth, are at a Loſs what to do; *they reel to and fro, and ſtagger like a drunken Man, and are at their Wits End:* And he alone, who can ſay to the tempeſtuous Deep, *here ſhall thy proud Waves be ſtayed,* can alone ſtill the Madneſs of an incenſed People, and ſay, *Hitherto ſhall* you *come, and no further.* SERM. VI.

Something ſhould be added concerning that *affectionate Manner,* in which theſe Truths are conveyed. When the *Heart* does not dictate to the *Head*; whatever is ſaid generally evaporates in empty *Speculation*; the Notions only hover in the Brain, without influencing the Will. But when an Author writes from the Heart, the Reader catches the Flame from the Writer, and feels his Breaſt glow with the ſame generous Ardor. Take one Inſtance of this, out of many, from *Iſaiah: Zion ſaid, the Lord hath forſaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a Woman forget her ſucking Child, that ſhe ſhould not have Compaſſion on the Son of her Womb? Yea, they may forget; yet will I not forget thee.* It is thus, that God ſignifies his

SERM. VI.

tender Love in the moſt endearing and expreſſive Terms, which Language can furniſh. Obſerve how the Pſalmiſt deſcribes God, as that ſovereign Good, on whom we ought to center our Affections, and repoſe our Confidence: *Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none upon Earth that I deſire in Compariſon of thee: My Fleſh and my Heart faileth; but God is the Strength of my Heart and my Portion for ever:* Words forcible enough, one would almoſt think, to invigorate the Soul under all the Decays of the Body, and to ſuſpend the Pains of the Dying. The Scriptures, unlike ſome Books which are written upon the Being of God, in a cold unaffecting Manner; at the ſame Time that they convey Light to the Underſtanding, powerfully inflame the Will, and touch the inmoſt Springs of the Soul.

Few or none have ever wrote worthily of that great Being, *who ſpake and it was done, who commanded and it ſtood faſt*; but thoſe, who have derived their Sentiments from the Fund of the Scriptures, and *borrowed* that *Fire* from *Heaven*, which *animated* their Writings: Which Conſideration would incline one to think, that he who

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is the *Subject* of theſe elevated Thoughts in the ſacred Pages, is the *Author* of them too. SERM. VI.

As to the Glories of God and of another World, I may venture to ſay, that the *utmoſt Stretch* of human *Thought* could never reach *ſo far*; and the *utmoſt Force* of *Expreſſion* cannot reach *farther*, than the inſpired Writers have done. And could one Book be produced before the Date of Chriſtianity, where every Perfection of the *Deity* is diſplayed in ſuch a *nervous Energy* of *Thought*; and every Branch of *Morality* is ſet forth in ſuch a *plain Familiarity* of *Style*; where the Terms of our Salvation are ſo punctually aſcertained, as they are in the Scripture: Then ſome Perſons would have ſome Colour of Reaſon to diſparage Revelation. But the Enemies of Chriſtianity know this to be impoſſible: They know it contains *ſtronger* Motives to true Holineſs, than *any* Religion before *had*; and as *ſtrong* as *any other can* have: They know, that ſecure in its own genuine Charms, it fears no *Rival* to *eclipſe*, and needs no *Foil* to *ſet off* its ſuperior Beauties.

SERM. VI.

The *Power, Wisdom and Goodness* of our Creator may be demonstrated by numerous and inconteſtable Arguments from the *Creation*. But one may look long enough into the *Creation*, and conſider it throughout, before one can deduce one Argument from thence to prove, what Mankind moſt wants to have proved, his *Mercy* to *repenting Criminals*. What ſignifieth it to prove God's *Goodneſs* to the *World* in *general*, without proving, that he will be good to *us Men*, to (what we all are) *miſerable Sinners?* Arguments of God's *clear* and *unmixed Mercy* to penitent Offenders, there can be none from Matter of *Fact*, if we ſet the Scriptures aſide; Arguments from *Metaphyſics* are very inconcluſive; but if they were not ſo, they are too abſtracted to make any ſtrong and durable Impreſſion upon ſuch Beings as we are: *One* expreſs and *authentic Declaration* from *God* himſelf would be of more Weight, than a *thouſand fine-ſpun Conjectures* without it. Accordingly the God of the Chriſtians is not *merely* our *Creator* and *Preſerver*, a Being of inexhauſtible Power and unfathomable Wiſdom; he is a God of *Mercy* and *Comfort*, *who is not willing that any*

any ſhould periſh, who *pitieth us, as a Father pitieth his own Children, who healeth the Broken-hearted,* who reſcueth us from the *Bondage of Corruption* by his *Grace,* and redeemeth us from the *Puniſhment* of it by his *Merits.* Such a God we ſinful Creatures wanted; and ſuch a God the Scriptures, which are exactly adapted to our Neceſſities, have repreſented him to us.

No Religion whatever hath given us a clearer Inſight into both the Dignity and Meanneſs of our Nature. The ſame ſacred Writings, which inform us, that we were made in the Image of our Creator, and that we ſhall be hereafter *Heirs* with him, with ſeveral other Conſiderations very proper to beget in us an *Ambition* of acting up to the *Dignity* of our Nature, and to *ſpirit up* the moſt *low* and grovelling *Minds*; the ſame ſacred Writings teach us that we can do nothing of ourſelves without the Grace of God co-operating with us, that nothing but the Merits of our Saviour can entitle us to any Rewards, with ſeveral other Reflections proper to preſerve in our Minds a Senſe of our Dependence, and to *humble* the moſt *haughty* and *inſolent.* Thus the Chriſtian Religion, which giveth us the moſt amia-

SERM. VI.

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SERM. VI.

ble as well as august and awful Ideas of our Creator, displays at once the bright and dark Side of human Nature, the one to *animate* the *Endeavours* of the *Good*, and the other to *damp* the *Presumptions* of the *Vain*. But this brings me,

II*dly*, To consider the intrinsic Excellency of the Scripture as to the Plan of Morality, which is laid down there, together with the Motives and Encouragements by which it has supported and enforced that Plan.

The Scriptures have taken care to lay down such pregnant Truths, as are big with several others, and fruitful in their Consequences. Of this Nature is the Precept about *loving God with all our Strength*: Of this Nature likewise is that about *loving our Neighbours as ourselves*; or what is much the same, that we should do to others, what we should judge reasonable others should do to us, if we were in their Case. This last Precept is sufficient to determine all Cases of social Morality; it being the Foundation of Honesty, Equity, Mercy, and Charity. It is a Duty incumbent upon us to store our Understanding with such

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leading Truths; becauſe ſuch *great* Truths come as it were *in State* to the Underſtanding, waited upon by a numerous *Retinue* of inferior dependent Truths: Like the Sun attended by a large Train of Planets, which are ſubordinate to him, and receive their Light from him. SERM. VI.

The Scriptures have been very full in pointing out *every Duty* in *general:* Becauſe corrupt human Nature is very *backward* in tracing out and diſcovering Duties. But they have not pointed out each *Limitation* of our Duty: Becauſe corrupt *Nature* is very *ingenious,* and *not* at all *reluctant* to do that Office. It is rather apt to *make Limitations,* where there are *none,* than *not* to *find* them where they really *are.* It was not ſo much the Deſign of Revelation punctually and exactly to fix the *Theory* of Morality, as to engage our Hearts to the *Practice* of it by the moſt powerful and affecting Conſiderations. And that may be one Reaſon, why it often reſts in *Generals,* without deſcending to *minute Particularities.* For if our *Hearts* be *not engaged* in favour of *Virtue,* it will be of no *Avail* to have each minute *Particularity* of Duty *aajuſted.* We ſhall break through

SERM. VI.

it, however minutely and particularly it is laid before us. A *general* Knowledge of his Duty is *sufficient* to him, whose Heart is *right*; and all the *particular Unfoldings* of it will be of *little Significancy* to him, whose Heart is *not* so.

God, who knew what was in Man, and has suited his Revelation to our Exigencies; has taken *most* care to *supply* us with that, which was *most wanted*: And therefore the Scriptures are *most full*, explicit, and particular, as to those Branches of Morality, to which our *Nature* was *most averse*. And though some complain that the Bible is *not clear* and *determinate enough* as to certain Points; yet, if I mistake not, the main Quarrel against it is, that it is *too clear and determinate* in enjoining *certain Duties*, and forbidding *certain Vices*; as to which they could have wished to have been left more at *large*. It cramps their Freedom of Action, and will not give certain importunate Passions their full Scope. It is there that the main Stress is laid upon those Virtues, in which the Heathen World were mostly or entirely defective, such as the Love of God with all our Heart, universal Benevolence, the Forgiveness of our Enemies, Meek-

Meekneſs, Long-ſuffering, the ſtricteſt Purity and Chaſtity. One diſtinguiſhing Excellency is, that it guards againſt the Hopes of compenſating for the habitual Breach of one Commandment, by the Obſervance of others. For it informs us, that he, who habitually and deliberately *offends in one Point*, does not perform *any* Duty out of a ſincere Regard to God, the only true Principle of Virtue; a very great Truth, but unknown to the Gentile Writers. There was no ſuch Thing in the Pagan World, as a rational and determinate Scheme of worſhipping God *in Spirit and in Truth*; and no ſuch Duty enjoined, as Humility in its full Latitude. No ſuch Precept occurs in Heathen Writers, as that we ſhould *give Alms in ſecret*; that our *Father which ſeeth in ſecret*, may *reward us openly*. And yet this is the moſt ſubſtantial Teſt of genuine Virtue. For we ought to be jealous of thoſe ſhining Qualities, which draw upon us the Admiration of the World, ſuch as Generoſity, Valour, *&c.* becauſe we are often actuated to the Diſplay of them by a Principle of Vain-Glory: But the Performance of good Actions in private, when the Stream of our Goodneſs runs under Ground,

SERM. VI.

Ground, stands clear of all sinister Views, and can only be resolved into a Principle of pleasing our Maker.

Before the Appearance of Christianity, the World had narrowed their Notions of Love, and confined it to the Pale of their Friends, Relations, and Country. A moral Writer of the most extensive Views, even *Socrates* himself, expresseth himself thus: "When the *Grecians* and *Barbari-*" *ans* fight one against the other, this is "properly called Fighting: For they are "Enemies by Nature. But if *Grecians*, "that are Friends by Nature, quarrel with "one another, this is an unnatural Dis-"temper *." Thus *Socrates* recommended an Attachment to his own Country, exclusively of the rest of Mankind, against whom he makes a State of Enmity to be natural. But Christianity has enlarged the Sphere of our Affections, as well as opened a wider Field of Truth for the Understanding; and enjoined a Love, as extensive as the Light of the Sun, and as active as its Heat. Then our Affections are prejudicial, when like the Sun-Beams, collected in a burning Glass, they centre in one Point;

* *Plato de Repub.* Lib. V.

when

when they are widely *diffuſed*, they chear and refreſh all Nature. Chriſtianity has taught us to love every one, but to dread no Man whatever. At the ſame Time, that it cheriſheth every manly, noble, and exalted Principle, of which human Nature is capable; it ſhuts out every little, ſervile, and illiberal Paſſion. A Love ſo extenſive was fit to be enjoined by that Being, who is Love itſelf, and has in him the Fulneſs of every amiable Perfection. SERM. VI.

Whereas other Writers took Things in too high a Key, and were proud to ſoar above the Level of common Apprehenſions; the inſpired Writers ſtoop to the loweſt Capacities, at the ſame Time, that they enlighten the higheſt. Of which the Parables of the *uncompaſſionate* Servant, of the *Samaritan*, of the *prodigal* Son, of the poor Man's *Ewe Lamb*, of the Vineyard in *Iſaiah*, of the barren Tree *which cumbered the Ground*; are ſo many beautiful Inſtances. We view moral Truths through the Veil of Allegories and Parables; like ſo many Pictures through a tranſparent Glaſs, which covers, but does not hide them. Some of the moſt important ſpiritual Sentiments, as particularly in the

the elegant Parables of the Tares, are made eaſy to us by the moſt familiar and ſenſible Images. Thus does *Truth*, like the great *Author* of it, ſtand confeſſed in a viſible Shape, receive, as it were, a *Body*, and become, if I may uſe the Expreſſion, *incarnate*.

From theſe few Strictures on the Plan of Morality contained in the Scripture, I proceed to what was the principal Intention of the ſacred Writers, the Enforcement of Morality by proper Sanctions and Encouragements.

The inſpired Penmen have placed Virtue on its *true Foundation*, not upon any *preſent* Complacency, not upon any *low temporal* Motives of *Conveniency*; but upon *heavenly* Views, upon the Will of *God* as our *Judge* and *Rewarder*. To follow Virtue *diſintereſtedly*, without any Regard to our *Happineſs here or hereafter*, is to purſue it as an *empty Idea*, and not as a *ſubſtantial Good*. To love it for the Sake of *preſent Pleaſure and Happineſs*, will never induce an effectual Obligation; becauſe Virtue and Pleaſure do not always coincide; and becauſe that reflex Act of the Mind, by which it applauds itſelf, when it has entertained a generous Sentiment, or done a noble

noble Action, is eaſily over-ruled and diſ- SERM. VI.
abled by the urgent Solicitation of any boiſterous and craving Paſſion, and by any uncommon Diſtreſs and Anguiſh. Fine unintereſting Ideas of Virtue, even in a *Soil ſuſceptible* of them, which ſome Soils are *not*, *flouriſh as a Flower of the Field*: Which, however delicate and beautiful the Leaves may be, *as ſoon as the Wind* (any ſtrong tempeſtuous Wind) *goeth over it, it is gone, and the Place thereof,* for a Time, *knoweth it no more.* Beſides, whether of the two acts upon nobler Principles, the Man, who cultivates Virtue for the *reflex Approbation* of his *own Mind,* or he who practiſeth it for the *unerring* Approbation of *his Maker?* The Man, who loves Goodneſs for a much *lower,* becauſe *preſent* Conſideration, *viz.* the Pleaſure *immediately* conſequent to a good Action; or he, who commands a more *ſpacious Proſpect,* has more open and *extended Views,* and looks *beyond* this tranſient Scene of Things, to that *Fulneſs of Joy, which is at God's right Hand for evermore?*

Be that as it will, an *exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory* will turn the Scales,

SERM. VI. Scales, and preponderate in all Cases in Favour of Morality: But weigh a cold unaffecting Thought about abstract Fitnesses, and the Loveliness of Order, against the strong Pressure of incumbent Misery; and it will be *found wanting, lighter than Vanity, and nothing* in Comparison. God designed the *World in general* should be governed by Morality, and not only a *few national* Men, fond of Refinements, who may be so enamoured of Virtue, as to think it needs no Reward, but itself; nor Vice any Punishment, but its own natural ill Consequences. And what God designed for the Gross of the Species, that he has enforced by such *substantial* Rewards and Punishments, as may *interest* all the Powers of a Soul deeply *immersed in Matter*; and not by such *airy visionary* Notions, as seem to be calculated for quite *another Order of Beings*. And this is one great Proof of the Excellency of Christianity, that it can appeal to the common Sense of Mankind: "*Handle me and see*; the refined "Schemes, which are set up in Opposition "to me, have not that Substance and Soli- "dity, *which ye see me have*." Those fine-spun Notions may afford Entertainment to

ſpeculative Men in their *Cloſets*; but the Chriſtian Doctrine of a future State, is the only one that can be of any *Uſe* in *common* Life, conveying to us the ſtrongeſt Ideas of that Miſery, to which the Bad will be conſigned; and of that Happineſs, to which the Good will be admitted. SERM. VI.

Eye hath not ſeen, nor Ear heard, neither hath it entered into the Heart of Man to conceive the Things that God hath prepared for them that love him. In which Words there is, as a great Writer * obſerveth, a very beautiful Gradation of Thought. Great, ſplendid, and numerous are the Objects, which the Eye hath ſeen: Yet the Ear may hear far more than one Man's Eye hath ſeen, by an enlarged Converſation with thoſe who have read and travelled: But though a greater Variety of Objects may gain Admittance to the Mind through *this* Entrance, than through that of the Eye; yet ſtill it enters into the Heart of Man to conceive or imagine far more glorious Things, than even the Ear has heard. A ſprightly, adventurous, and inventive Imagination paints Objects larger than the Original, and forms what vi-

* See Dr. *Clarke*'s poſthumous Sermons, Vol. II.

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ſionary Scenes
thoſe Things,
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enter into the
as the Concep
Powers of a
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the Ear.

Again, St.
God: For we
is, the ſeeing
Nature, the
vereign Good,
pineſs from h
God as he is,
contemplate
fill the Compa
all her Power
entertain igno
tempt her to
ſome degree,
in Goodneſs b
ſure and *Virt*
different Ways
Forces, and a
Thought is th

cenes it pleases within. But still
ngs, which God has prepared for
t love him, as much exceed the
ngs of a pregnant Fancy, and the
Prospects of Bliss, which it can
the Heart of Man to conceive;
nceptions of the Heart, and the
f a luxuriant Imagination surpass
g of the Eye, and the Hearing of

St. *John* tells us, *we shall be like*
we shall see him as he is. That
eing of God as he is in his own
the direct Knowledge of the So-
Good, and the Emanations of Hap-
om him immediately, (for to see
e is, does not signify merely to
ate his Nature) will so entirely
Compass of the Soul, and engross
Powers, that having no Room to
ignobler Objects, which might
er to Vice, she must become, in
gree, unalterably like her Creator
ness by a moral Necessity. *Plea-*
Virtue, which here often *draw*
Ways, will hereafter unite their
and act in friendly Concert. This
is the Thought of an unlettered
Writer;

Writer; yet it is a Thought ſo rati
well as elevated; that it would be
Attempt to ſtrive to equal it from
before him of the moſt diſtinguiſhe
ties and cloſeſt Application.

Let us ſcan over the brighteſt
of Antiquity, let us point out the
Strokes of thoſe Authors when t
inculcating Benevolence: Yet wh
we find ſo bright a Deſcription o
volence or Charity, as there is in St
xiiith Chapter of his firſt Epiſtle
Corinthians; or ſo noble an Incite
it, as there is in theſe Words, *Ch
ver faileth?* i. e. The ſame Prin
univerſal Love to Mankind, which
Acts of Goodneſs beget in us he
beautify, enlarge, and ennoble the
all Eternity.

Not all the Writings of Philo
can give a dying Man, juſt u
Threſhold of another World, h
well-grounded Comfort and ration
rance of being happy, as may be
from four or five Lines of St. *Jo
That he ſaw in Heaven a great M
not to be numbered, of all Nations,
and People, and Tongues, ſtandin*

o rational, as
ld be a vain
from Writers
uiſhed Abili-

teſt Authors
t the Maſter-
ien they are
et where can
ion of Bene-
in St. *Paul*'s
piſtle to the
ncitement to
, *Charity ne-*
Principle of
hich repeated
us here, will
e the Soul to

Philoſophers
nſt upon the
d, half that
ational Aſſu-
y be derived
. *John*, *viz.*
at Multitude,
tions, *Tribes*,
anding before
the

SERM. VI. *the Throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white Robes, with Palms* (the Enſigns of Victory) *in their Hands, and the Praiſes of God and the Lamb in their Mouths.* For from hence we may learn, what Reaſon could never prove, that not only the *ſuperior Few*, Men of the moſt advanced Virtue, Saints and Apoſtles; but an innumerable Multitude, the *undiſtinguiſhed Many*, undiſtinguiſhed by an extraordinary Degree of Holineſs, ſhall be Partakers of thoſe pure and unmixed Joys, which are ſuitable to glorified Souls acting in glorified Bodies, which will enlarge our Faculties, ſatisfy our Deſires, and tranſcend our Expectations.

And indeed we may obſerve, that, whenever the Scriptures *draw back the Veil*, and diſplay to our View any thing concerning another World; they do not do it to *ſwell* and puff up the Soul with *lifeleſs Speculations*, with unconcerning, though ingenious and curious Notions; but to *fill* the Mind with true *ſubſtantial* Knowledge, that may make *us wiſe unto Salvation*: Which makes them, though not the moſt fine-ſpun, yet the moſt uſeful, and conſequently the beſt Scheme of Metaphyſics that ever was advanced. Thus

SERM. VI.

Thus when the ſacred Writings deſcribe the *thouſands, thouſands that ſtand before God, and the ten thouſand times ten thouſand that miniſter unto him*; could a Man of the largeſt Compaſs of Thought have found a nobler Employment for thoſe Beings, as well as more inſtructive to us, than to repreſent them as taking a generous and diſintereſted Complacency in the Redemption and Happineſs of their Fellow-Creatures, *praiſing God, and ſaying, Glory be to God in the higheſt, and on Earth Peace, Good-will towards Men?* And in another Place, not like us, valuing themſelves, and deſpiſing others; not dazzled with the Luſtre of their own Excellencies, but aſcribing all Glory, and Honour, and Power to him alone who is the Source of whatever is lovely, great, and glorious, *caſting down their Crowns before the Throne of God, giving Glory and Honour and Power to Him alone?* Rev. iv. 10, 11. *Great and marvellous are thy Works, Lord God Almighty; juſt and true are thy Ways, thou King of Saints!* They ſhew us, that to Creatures admitted to a conſtant and *immediate Attendance* on *God*, *every* Thing muſt appear *little*, but *God* himſelf; that

SERM. VI.

the *Luſtre* of the *greateſt created* Being muſt vaniſh and be loſt in the Preſence of Him, from whom it *borrows* its Luſtre.

Contemplative Perſons may value ſome Branches of Knowledge, juſt as ſeveral Men do ſome kinds of *Food*, merely becauſe they are *rare* and *uncommon*, *not* becauſe they are *ſubſtantial*, *nouriſhing*, and *wholeſome*. Their Difficulty and Obſcurity, not their Serviceableneſs to the World, ſtamps a Value upon them. And their Heads may reſemble thoſe Cabinets, which are ſtored with *uſeleſs Rarities*, and *curious* Trifles, fit for *Shew* and *Oſtentation*, but not for any *valuable Purpoſes* of Life. But the Scriptures, though they open and enlarge the Mind, and give it the moſt comprehenſive Views; yet ſeldom ſay any Thing to inform the Head, which has not a Tendency to awaken and penetrate the Heart: They ſeldom gratify our *mere* Curioſity, or make us *wiſer* and more *knowing*, but in order to make us *better*, which is indeed the only *true* Wiſdom.

No well-meaning Perſon even in low Life ever applied himſelf to the reading of the Scriptures with the ſame Diligence, Care, and Attention, which he beſtowed

upon Things of leſs Conſequence; but he gathered from thence as much ſalutary and *practical* Knowledge, as would conduct him ſafely in the Way to everlaſting Life. Though the ſtudious and the thoughtful may by an unwearied Application diſcover ſeveral *ſpeculative* Truths which are *not* there; yet thoſe Truths are only like thoſe *Stars*, which are deſcried by the Help of *Teleſcopes:* They have no more *uſeful* Light to *guide their Feet*, and direct their Steps in their Journey through this World, than thoſe, who have made no ſuch Diſcoveries. SERM. VI.

There is no material Defect in a State of *Nature*, when Men had only the Light of unaſſiſted Reaſon, but what is ſupplied to a Tittle by a State of Grace, by the Chriſtian Diſpenſation. Were Men, for Inſtance, at a Loſs to aſcertain from unenlightened Reaſon the Acceptableneſs of their Repentance, and a Fulneſs of Pardon thereupon; Chriſtianity has fully ſet before us the Terms of our Salvation: We have there a Mediator, who hath borne our Sins, the propereſt Perſon to adjuſt the Difference between the jarring

SERM. VI. Claims of Justice and Goodness. Did we want a distinct Account of Rewards and Punishments; of their Degree and Duration? It gives us awakening Notices of another World, and whatever was proper to instruct our Reason, as well as to engage our Hopes and alarm our Fears. Did we want some fixed and determinate Rule of Worship to prevent the endless Sallies of human Fancy? There we are taught each Particular of a manly and rational Worship; we are invited by the Promises of divine Assistance, and emboldened by the Intercession of a divine Mediator to have Access to the Throne of Grace.

It is well worth our while, as it will give us the greater Value for Christianity, to observe, that in these, as well as other Instances, wherever the Light of *Reason*, as having no sure *Principles* to carry it farther, was forced to *leave a Blank*, the Light of the *Gospel* has been very exact in *filling up the void Space*. Where human Sagacity might indeed begin to build, but was not able to finish after the utmost Expence of Thought, there Revelation has supplied it with Materials to complete the Structure. Thus do our Wants in a State

of Nature, and our Supplies in a State of Revelation, exactly tally and correſpond. And from hence we may infer, that, whoever is a *ſincere natural* Religioniſt, cannot be *far from the Kingdom of Heaven*, is *almoſt* a Chriſtian already; and will be ſoon, if he continues unprejudiced, *altogether* ſo. For he, who is *ſincerely deſirous* to know and do the Will of God, muſt heartily wiſh he had better Helps, than natural Religion affords, to compaſs this End. He muſt think, that God's infinite Goodneſs would, at ſome peculiar Criſis of Time, when he ſaw the Advantages ariſing from it would overbalance the Inconveniencies, grant Mankind, by a Notification of his Will, ſome *full* and *expreſs* Aſſurances of what *belongs to their Peace*, of Things of *infinite* Concernment. And when he examines all the different Pretenſions to Revelation, he will find none, that can come into *Competition* with the *Chriſtian*; which alone contains *whatever* is *excellent* in *natural* Religion, and has beſides *grafted* upon it ſeveral rich and ſalutary Fruits of its *own Growth*, which Reaſon muſt ever thankfully adopt. For natural Religion neither proves the Sincerity or unallayed Nature of Happineſs

SERM. VI.

SERM. VI.

hereafter, nor the Degree nor the Duration of it: Nor can it be determined by Reaſon, whether our future Happineſs or Miſery would be finally decided by an irrevocable Sentence, according to our Deportment here; or whether, after the Cloſe of this Life we might not paſs through ſeveral intermediate States of Probation, before a deciſive and irreverſible Judgment was paſſed upon us. But Revelation aſſures us, that the Condition of our Exiſtence here, however inconſiderable it may ſeem *in itſelf abſtractedly* from a future State, is infinitely conſiderable in its *Conſequences*—that he, that lives and dies *righteous, will be righteous ſtill*; and he, that dies *filthy*, will be *filthy ſtill*, Rev. xxii. 11, 12. Death ſetting as it were a kind of Seal upon the State of the Soul—that the Wicked muſt be finally ſevered from the Good—that in Heaven there is no Poſſibility of falling away from Goodneſs, and in Hell no Room for Amendment. For then God's Grace will be with-held, and Virtue, when every Spark of it is extinct, is only, like the Veſtal Fire, to be rekindled by a Beam from Heaven.

So

So far was Chriſtianity from narrowing our Views, that it alone has *raiſed* them, as *high*—as *Heaven*; and extended them as *far*—as *Eternity*. A Man may look into his Bible, and ſee plainly there what will become of him, when the preſent Scene is ſhifted, as to his *moſt important*, I had almoſt ſaid, his *only* Concern, a future State; who, if he were left to himſelf, the more he conſidered the Point on every Side, the more he would find himſelf bewildered in Doubts, without coming to any Determination.

Happy are we, if we know our Happineſs, who have a Revelation, like its great Revelation, *full of Grace and Truth.*

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SERM. VI.

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SERMON VII.

The intrinſic Excellency of the Scriptures, a Proof of their divine Inſpiration.

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1 PETER III. 15.

Be ready always to give an Anſwer to every Man that aſketh you a Reaſon of the Hope that is in you.

SERM. VII.

TO affirm, as ſome have done, that unenlightened Reaſon is abſolutely ſufficient, and that a Revelation is needleſs, is neither better nor worſe, than to ſay, that Men either are, or may be, *ſo* wiſe of *themſelves*, that it is not in the Power of *God* himſelf to make them *wiſer*; that their *natural* Abilities are ſo very conſiderable, as to ſuperſede the Uſe of any *ſupernatural* Notices, even from the *Father of Lights*: A Poſition

sition so shocking, that if it be not downright Blasphemy; it certainly maketh very near Approaches to it *.

But, you will say, where was God's impartial Goodness in with-holding from others those Advantages, which he has afforded us? If a Revelation were wanted, why was not that, which was equally wanted by all, made equally known to all, at all Times?

If we trace this Objection to its Original, we shall find it stands on a wrong Foundation: It supposes the Deity to be determined by the *Wants* of Men, *exclusively* of all *other* Regards: Whereas, what may be very fit, the Wants of Men singly

* I would not be thought to depreciate Reason in general, which rightly understood, as taking in all Helps and Evidences, whether intrinsic or extrinsic, is the only Faculty we have to discern Truth from Falshood. It is no more a Disparagement to Reason to assert, it can do little in religious Affairs without the Help of *Revelation*; than to maintain, it would make a slender Figure without the Assistance of *Education*: For what is Revelation but Assistances and Instructions from *Heaven*; as Education is Instruction communicated to us from our *Fellow-Creatures?* Deduct those religious Truths that were discovered *to* us, and only place those down, that were discovered *by* us; and the remaining Sum of our Knowledge, at the Foot of the Account, will not be very considerable.

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conſidered; may be unfit upon the Whole, all Circumſtances and Conſiderations being laid together. Thus conſider the Neceſſities of a poor Man *ſeparately*, and you may think it proper he ſhould be relieved: But if you know he will abuſe your Charity in Drunkenneſs, or do himſelf or others ſome Prejudice, the Fitneſs ceaſeth. Here then the Fallacy lieth. We form our Judgment of what God ought to do upon one ſingle View of the Neceſſities of Men; where ſeveral other Particulars ought to be taken into the Account to make our Reaſoning juſt and exact. We know not, for Inſtance, whether an Attempt to remedy the Diſadvantages of thoſe, who want a Revelation, might not be attended with greater Diſadvantages to them: Whether they might not inflame their Account by rejecting it, if offered; or abuſing it, if received. He alone, who ſees through the whole Plan of the Creation, who knows before-hand the different Tempers and Diſpoſitions of all Mankind, in all Ages and Nations, and the various Conſequences that would ariſe from every poſſible Manner of acting at every Period of Time; knew alone, at what Period of Time,

Time, to what Ages and Nations it was proper to give a Revelation. God then might be equally willing at all Times to make a fuller Manifestation of his Will; (for some Traces and Remains of a Revelation Men still had;) but Men might not at all Times be equally disposed and qualified to receive it.

I answer farther, that it might as well be objected, why has not God given to all Men equal *inward* Abilities to discover the Truth; as why he has not given to all Men equal *external* Evidences? The Answer is the same to both Objections, *viz.* that God is not obliged to deal *equally* with all his Creatures in the Dispensation of his Favours, having a Right to do what he will with his own: It is enough to vindicate his moral Character, that he will deal *equitably* with them according to the Improvement of their respective Talents, compensating for some People's Want of Knowledge, whether natural or revealed, by making favourable *Allowances* to them, and balancing the superior Advantages of others, by making larger *Demands from* them, and requiring no more of *any* Person than he has given him sufficient *Means* to

know,

know, and *Ability* to *perform*. Let us balance the Account.——To the Chriſtians greater Knowledge——greater Duty——greater Difficulty——greater Reward, if they do well——greater Puniſhments, if ill. To the Heathens leſs Light——leſs Duty——leſs Reward if they do well——leſs Puniſhment if ill. SERM. VII.

Thus all ſeeming Inequalities are adjuſted. Where the Difficulty of the Conqueſt is the greateſt, there the Triumph ought to be the moſt glorious, and the Prize moſt valuable. If thoſe, who have the moſt clear and diſtinct Notices of their Duty, will be more ſeverely puniſhed for their Crimes than others; it is but equitable, that they ſhould be entitled to ſuperior Rewards, when their Practice in ſome meaſure keeps Pace with their Knowledge: Otherwiſe, Knowledge would be a great Misfortune, and Darkneſs better than Light.

That Reaſon therefore is ſo far ſufficient, as to enable Men to procure as much Happineſs here and hereafter, as God, according to the Variety of his Diſpenſations to Creatures, whether of the ſame or a different Order, has, in his comprehenſive Wiſdom,

SERM. VII. Wisdom, thought fit; and that none will be accountable for invincible Ignorance; this we readily grant: But that Reason is so unlimitedly sufficient, as to discover without the Assistance of God all those beneficial and spiritual Truths, which are revealed; and to procure, without the Merits of Christ, all that Happiness which is promised to Christians; this we deny.

God may diversify his Creation, as he pleases, his manifold Wisdom may bring upon the Theatre of Nature, Variety of Creatures, under unequal Circumstances, consistently with his Goodness; provided he has put it in every one's Power to make his Happiness prepollent and superior to his Misery in the Whole of his Existence. But this God may have done, without having Recourse to levelling Principles, without being obliged to put Heathens and Christians, any more than he has put Men and Angels, on the same Foot.

The main Stress of the Question then lies here. Whether, notwithstanding the distinguishing Advantages of some Creatures above others, it be not enough to vindicate God's Goodness, that he has formed no Creature whatever, whether Angel or Man, Christian

Chriſtian or Heathen, but what has ſufficient Means to make the Sum of his Happineſs exceed that of his Miſery, either here or hereafter? If they ſay, this is not ſufficient; they are not Deiſts but ſomething worſe; they ſet aſide that Principle, which ſeems to account for that Diſproportion of Happineſs in the World, ſo viſible in the Scale of Beings riſing one above another, from the meaneſt Inſect to the higheſt Archangel. If they ſay, it is ſufficient; the ſame Reaſon, which juſtifieth God in giving Angels greater Degrees of Knowledge and Bliſs, than Men; will juſtify him too in giving Chriſtians a larger Allotment of both than Heathens. For there is the ſame Principle to vindicate God in both Caſes, *viz.* every one's Enjoyments will, if it be not their own Fault, over-balance their Unhappineſs: Therefore the Concluſion ought to be the ſame, *viz.* God is equally juſtified in both Caſes. When once his Goodneſs has deſigned every Creature, who is not wanting to himſelf, a *Preponderancy* of Bliſs; his unerring Wiſdom may diſpoſe of the *Surplus* that remains beyond this, as he thinks fit. Whereas, according to the Suppoſition of the Deiſts, there

SERM. VII.

must have been a dull undistinguished Sameness in every Oeconomy of Providence, without any Regard to the different Dispositions of Mankind, at different Periods of Time: Every Procedure of God must have been, from Eternity to Eternity, only a different Edition of the same unvaried Design, without any new Additions.

I have already, in a former Discourse, shewn the superior Advantages and intrinsic Excellency of revealed Religion, and the Scriptures, I*st*, as to the Manifestation of the divine Nature; and II*dly*, as to the beautiful Plan of Morality contained in them, together with those Motives and Encouragements, by which they have supported and enforced that Plan.

It was not improper to remove the Objection, which I have been considering; before I entered upon my III*d* Head, to which I now proceed, *viz.* to consider the Force of the Argument, which may be drawn from the intrinsic Excellency of the Scriptures in favour of their divine Inspiration.

To whom was it owing, that the *Jewish* Writers should have such lovely and great Ideas of God, and such just Notions of the

the Worſhip due to him, far above any Thing which we meet with in the Writings of the greateſt Lights of the Heathen World; every one of which either patronized Idolatry, or fell into Errors of worſe Conſequence? Can it be accounted for by the Force of *natural* or *human* Aſſiſtances? No, the eminent Philoſophers of *Athens* and *Rome equalled* them, it is certain, in *natural* Abilities; and *exceeded* them confeſſedly in the Superſtructures of *acquired* Knowledge, and all the Advantages of a refined *Education.* It muſt be therefore owing to ſome *ſupernatural* or *divine* Helps; and none but He, in whom are contained *all the Treaſures of Wiſdom,* could have enriched their Minds to ſuch a Degree, and furniſhed ſuch a vaſt Expence of Thought. If *Judea* was ennobled by theſe exalted Notions, of which other Nations, who were ſunk into the Dregs of Polytheiſm and Idolatry, were deſtitute; if the kindly Dew of Heaven deſcended on this Fleece only, while all the Earth around betrayed a Want of refreſting Moiſture; this was *the Lord's doing,* and ought to be *marvellous in our Eyes.* SERM. VII.

Serm. VII.

Had God revealed himſelf to the *Greeks*, or ſome other Nation famed for their curious Reſearches into every Branch of Literature, and for the Depths of Wiſdom and Policy; thoſe Truths, which were ſo many Emanations from the great Fountain of Light, would have been looked upon as the Reſult of their Penetration, and their own Diſcoveries: But by communicating his Will to a People of no inventive and enterprizing Genius, of no enlarged Reach and Compaſs of Thought; ſuch Suſpicions are avoided, and the Proofs of a Revelation more conſpicuous and illuſtrious. And this may be one Reaſon among others, why at a Time, when the reſt of the World were bigotted to Superſtition, Idolatry, and a falſe Religion, God ſingled out this Nation, in that Point, not ſo corrupt as others, to be the Guardian and Depoſitary of the true.

If nothing recommended the Scripture but this ſingle Conſideration, that all thoſe collected Beams of ſpiritual Light center in it alone, which were widely diffuſed amidſt a Variety of Treatiſes, and loſt amidſt a Crowd of palpable Abſurdities; even this would be no improbable Argument of

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its Divinity: But this is not all: Let us, in order to compile an adequate unerring Standard of religious Truths, take in all the Aſſiſtances we can get from all the Philoſophers in *Greece*, from *Tully* at *Rome*, nay, even from *Confucius* as far as *China*; and yet, after all, the Scheme will be defective in, what the Scriptures have recommended, a pure rational Worſhip of God only in Spirit and in Truth, a Fulneſs of Pardon for every Sin upon Repentance, and the Nobleneſs of the Rewards hereafter. The Love of God will not be required in ſo high a Degree, as it is in the Scriptures; nor enforced by ſo ſtrong a Motive, as our Saviour's dying for Mankind has done; nor our Charity and Love to the Diſtreſſed recommended by ſo powerful an Incentive, as that our Redeemer has made them his Repreſentatives, and will place to his own Account, whatever was done for his Sake to them. SERM. VII.

One may challenge any Man to produce before Chriſtianity, among the Heathen World, ſuch a complete Syſtem of Morality, reaching all the Duties of Life, without any Defect; and *full* without *overflowing*, or any Redundancy, as the Scriptures

SERM. VII.

contain. Very remarkable are the Words of Mr. *Locke* *. "It is true, *says he*, "there is a Law of Nature: But who is "there, that ever did or undertook to "give it us all entire as a Law; no more, "nor no less than what was contained in "and had the Obligation of that Law? "Who ever made out all the Parts of it, "put them together, and shewed the World "their Obligation? Where was there any "such Code, that Mankind might have "Recourse to as their unerring Rule, be-"fore our Saviour's Time? Such a Law "of Morality Jesus Christ hath given us "in the new Testament.——And such a "one out of the new Testament, I think "the World never had, nor can any one "say is elsewhere to be found." And again, "If you sent Men to the Sayings of "the Wise, and the Declarations of the "Philosophers, you sent them into a wild "Wood of Uncertainty, to an endless "Maze, from which they should never get "out; if to the Religions of the World, "yet worse: And if to their own Reason, "you refer them to that which had some "Light and Certainty, but yet had hi-

* See *Locke*'s Reasonableness of Christianity.

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" therto failed all Mankind in a perfect
" Rule, and reſolved not the Doubts that
" had riſen among the ſtudious and think-
" ing Philoſophers; nor had yet been able
" to convine the civilized Part of Man-
" kind, that they had not given, nor could,
" without a Crime, take away the Lives of
" their Children, by expoſing them."

It is needleſs to tell any Man of plain Senſe, that there muſt be always a *Proportion* between the *Cauſe* and the *Effect*. Now, if we *exclude* the *divine* Power, *what Proportion* can we find between the *Cauſes* of Chriſtianity, and *Chriſtianity* itſelf? Chriſtianity is a *Religion*, which has *diſabuſed* the World, and reſcued it from thoſe many vicious Practices, ſuch as the expoſing of Infants, Polygamy, *&c.* which were univerſally defended among the Pagans, and from human Sacrifices, and from innumerable abominable and brutal Rites; a Religion ſo perfective of *human* Nature, and ſo expreſſive of the *divine*; that we *want Ideas* to carry us to a *Conception* of *any* Thing *beyond* it. And *who* were the *Authors* or *Cauſes* of this Religion? Why, a Set of Men bred up in *low* Life to *mean* Employments, which *cramp* the *native*

SERM. VII. Powers of the *Mind*. And can we ſeriouſly think that a Set of *unlettered, unenterpriſing* Men could open ſeveral rich Mines of Truth, which had eſcaped the laborious *Reſearches* of the profoundeſt *Scholars*, and the happy *Sagacity* of the moſt penetrating *Wits*?

Since therefore every *Effect* muſt have a *competent* and *proportionable Cauſe*; and ſince the ſuppoſed *natural* Cauſes and Authors of Chriſtianity, conſidered as *mere* Men excluſive of divine Inſpiration, were plainly *unequal* to the Taſk, nor could ever have brought to Light ſuch Doctrines, as exceeded whatever the Philoſophers before had done; though, laying aſide their Dregs, we ſhould draw off the very Flower and Spirit of their Writings: It is evident, we muſt have Recourſe to ſome *ſupernatural* and *adequate* Cauſe, which intereſted itſelf in this Affair. And to whom, but to the *Father of Light, in whom there is no Darkneſs at all*, can we be indebted; that now Perſons of the *ſlendereſt* Capacities may view thoſe elevated and beneficial Truths in the ſtrongeſt Point of Light, which the *fineſt* Spirits of the *Gentile* World could not before fully aſcertain; that our

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meaneſt Mechanics, with a moderate Share of Application, may have juſter and fuller Notions of God's Attributes, of eternal Happineſs, of every Duty reſpecting their Maker, Mankind, and themſelves; than the moſt *diſtinguiſhed Scholars* among the Heathens could attain to, after a *Life* laid out in painful *Reſearches?* SERM. VII.

Chriſtianity has been a *Light to lighten* the Deiſts, as well as *the Glory*, Happineſs, and Salvation of every good Chriſtian. Even they who decry Revelation, are greatly indebted to it, for much clearer and more enlarged Views of Things, than they could have had, if bred up in Countries altogether unenlightened by it. Even they enjoy the Benefits, and *gather* the *Fruits* of Chriſtianity, at the ſame Time, that they are ſtriving to *damage* and wound the *Tree* which bears them.

The Maintainers of the Sufficiency of human Reaſon are, as to this Point, very much diſtreſſed: Strange! that *Reaſon without Revelation* ſhould be a *ſufficient* Guide, when they cannot prove, that it has conducted any *one* Man in any one *Age* or *Nation*, no not even *Socrates* himſelf, to a *full* unerring *Standard* of *Duty*. How happened

SERM. VII.

happened it then, that the Authors of the Scriptures ſhould *alone*, of all Mankind, have *Senſe* enough to form an *adequate* Scheme of *Duty*, *Courage* enough to ſet on foot the *Propagation* of it, and *Perſeverance* enough to bring it to *bear*, notwithſtanding all the Engines of worldly Power were played againſt them? How comes it, that all ſucceeding Writers have not been able to diſcover one important religious Truth, but what is either expreſsly contained in the Bible, or is implied in it, and may be fairly deduced from it? All that ſucceeding Writers have done, has been only to ſtate and limit the Doctrines, to collect, adjuſt, and range, in an exact Chain of Reaſoning, thoſe religious and moral Obſervations, which lie ſcattered in the Scripture with a noble Profuſion. Juſt as the utmoſt Skill of Mankind cannot form *one new Plant*: They may indeed *cultivate*, and place in a regular *Symmetry* and *Order*, thoſe Trees, as well as thoſe Flowers, which are ſown in a beautiful Diſorder by the Author of Nature. Theſe Things are only thus to be accounted for, *viz.* That God who does nothing in vain, but is not wanting in what

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is neceſſary, imprinted on their Minds theſe comprehenſive Truths, but left it to them to expreſs them in what Language and Order they thought proper. It was not neceſſary, that God ſhould *beautify* the ſacred Writings with all the *Elegancies* of *Language* and *Method*; it was enough that he has *enriched* them with an inexhauſtible Fund of *uſeful Truths*. They needed not the *Spectacles* of Books, whoſe Eyes God himſelf opened, to diſcern and reveal theſe wondrous Things. SERM. VII.

Unlettered Men, in attempting to reveal *the Deep Things of God*, muſt have fallen into palpable Abſurdities, unleſs they had been directed by that Spirit, which *ſearcheth all Things; yea the deep Things of God.* For even *lettered Men*, ſpeculative Adventurers of the ſtrongeſt and brighteſt Parts, whenever they have, without the Help of Revelation, made Excurſions into the World of Spirits, have diſcovered nothing but their Ignorance, and Liableneſs to groſs Miſtakes. Men, who *were not* under the Power of an ungoverned Imagination, would ſcarce have ſallied out into Subjects, where our Faculties can find no ſure Footing; and Men, who *were*, could never have worked out

SERM. VII. out ſuch a plauſible and conſiſtent Scheme, as our Faculties cannot confute. How comes it then, that the ſacred Writers, in ſetting before us the Nature and Offices of good and bad Angels, the Joys of Heaven, *&c.* have kept clear of all flagrant Errors, for any thing that we can make out to the contrary? How comes it that all Inquirers after them, have been unable to prove any Thing relating to theſe Points, which they have *not ſaid*; and to diſprove any Thing, which they *have* ſaid? How comes it, if they were uninſpired, that though they have delivered ſeveral Doctrines, which Reaſon cannot aſcertain; yet they *ſay* nothing which Reaſon can *gainſay*, upon Subjects to which our Faculties are diſproportioned, and as to which we are therefore more ſubject to Abſurdities?

Add to this, that we have a vital Senſe of the Goodneſs of Chriſtianity. No Body that heartily believed in our Saviour, and acted agreeably to his Precepts, ever repented that he had done ſo: Thouſands have felt a Remorſe and Compunction of Soul, that they have not been *altogether* Chriſtians. The more a Man has been a ſincere and ſound Chriſtian; the more Peace and

Sunſhine of Mind he has felt in himſelf, and the more Confidence he has expreſſed towards God. For this ſenſible Experience of the Goodneſs and Truth of Chriſtianity we have the united Suffrages of Men of diſtinguiſhed Piety, from the firſt Birth of Chriſtianity, down to the preſent Times. Several of them enjoyed as much Peace as this World can give; and all of them that Peace, which it cannot give. He certainly acts moſt agreeably to the Will of the Deity, and to (what is inſeparably connected with his Will) the Truth of Things, who embraces and adheres to that Religion, which will make him the meekeſt, humbleſt, the moſt benevolent, pious, and, in all Reſpects, the beſt Man; which gives him the moſt aſtoniſhing, yet the moſt amiable Views of the Divinity, and the moſt rational and intereſting Account of Heaven and Hell, which contains, whatever God, through a diffuſive Goodneſs, has done for Mankind; and what Mankind have yet to do for themſelves, to *work out their Salvation.* SERM. VII.

The intrinſic Excellency of Chriſtianity, I am afraid, has given many the greateſt Diſtaſte for it. For I never could aſſign any

Serm. VII.

any Reason, why *Mahometans* and *Papists* (great Numbers of Them) seem to be very much *in earnest* about their Religions; but *We* (too many of us) very *remiss* and indifferent to Ours; but this very bad one, *viz.* that those Religions chiefly consist in, and lay too great Stress upon, *outward* Acts and *little* Observances: Whereas true Christianity descends deep into the *Heart*, *converting the Soul*, and indispensably enjoins an unreserved Obedience to God, and an *inward* Relish of Goodness, *rooted in our Minds*, and influencing our Practice throughout. Now Men would rather undergo innumerable *bodily* Austerities, and observe all the *Outside* of Piety; than cultivate an universal and *unsullied Purity of Heart*. A *Self-Indulgence* as to that Sin which most easily besets us, be it Vanity, spiritual Pride, Lust, or any other Vice, gives us so great Pleasure, that *no Self-Denials*, as to other Points, can countervail it, if they can be *called* Self-Denials. For then we *effectually* deny ourselves, when we refrain from those darling, but unlawful Pleasures, whether of Body or Mind, to which we have the strongest Bias. A pure undefiled Religion coming from God, the great

Searcher of Hearts, requires this Sacrifice of the Heart, without which no other Sacrifices, no external Performances, however ſeemingly difficult, will be of any Avail. A Religion commanding us to be as ſtrict and *regular* in our Lives, as the *Phariſee* in our Saviour's beautiful Parable, and yet as humble and *unpretending* as the *Publican*, was worthy of God; but we, by raiſing idle Cavils againſt it, make ourſelves unworthy of it. SERM. VII.

A complete Syſtem of moral and religious Truths, comprehending every Thing that has a Tendency to purify a rational Mind, and to qualify it for everlaſting Bliſs, ſeems to be a Work beyond the Powers of any *unenlightened Man*, the Excellency of whoſe Writings, whatever conſiderable and important Truths they might contain, to ſhew he was a *bright* and *able* Man; would be adulterated with impure Mixtures, and debaſed by coarſe Alloys of Errors, perhaps of a dangerous Nature, (not to mention many Omiſſions,) to prove he was a *mere* Man: Much more was ſuch a Scheme above the Abilities of *uneducated* Men. There ſeems to be ſomething in *Man's Nature*, which diſqualifies him from forming

SERM. VII.

ing a Religion *for himself*, without taking in any Assistances from *Heaven*. And whoever has set about it, has either *curtailed* and maimed it, *leaving out* some important Duties, which is the Case of *Deism*; or he has blended it with *spurious* and superstitious *Additions*, which is the Case of Popery. Those who want to have the modelling of Religion in their own Hands, are like the Countryman in the Fable, who requested the Management of the Weather as he pleased: They had much better leave that Affair to his Direction, who alone can order all Things for the best. Take a Survey of all confessedly *human* Inventions; and you will find, that when compared with *Christianity*, they *have no Glory, by Reason of the Glory that excelleth.*

Difficulties indeed and Obscurities there are in Scripture, as well as *other ancient* Books: But then we must distinguish between Difficulties which affect the *main Design* of a Revelation; and those of a *slighter* and less *momentous* Nature. Notwithstanding the Charge of Difficulties and Obscurities; the Scripture, though *deep*, is *clear* in *every* Doctrine, that tends to the Glory of God, the Good of Mankind, and

and the Benefit of our own Souls. *So far* God has gone; and farther than this he needed not to go, to anſwer the End of a Revelation. Whatever Things there are in it *hard to be underſtood*; which a moderate Application cannot clear up; they may exerciſe the Abilities of the *Curious*, but are not neceſſary to edify the *Bulk of Mankind*. Any Man, who *diligently* and impartially *ſearches the Scriptures*, comparing Place with Place, interpreting the *darker* Paſſages by the *clearer*, and attending to the *Scope* and *Deſign* of the Author; may furniſh himſelf with an intelligible, *conſiſtent* and *determinate Rule of Faith* and *Practice*; may derive from thence Hopes *full of* a bleſſed *Immortality*; and find there that beautiful *Aſſemblage* of moral Truths, *clear* and *unmixed*; which lye ſcattered through the Writings of *all* the Philoſophers, and are *blended* in them, with pernicious Errors. Whatever Precept is briefly and in general Terms delivered in one Place, is more clearly and diſtinctly unfolded in another: And no *important* Doctrine is founded only on *one* Text; it is inculcated in *ſeveral*, and placed before us in various *Views* and *Reviews*; like ſome SERM. VII.

SERM. VII. beautiful and maſterly Statue placed in a Garden, in which ſeveral Openings terminate, and conſpire to let us ſee it in Variety of Lights. Which Conſideration makes it impoſſible for any one, who has a *wrong* Hypotheſis to *ſerve*, to *endeavour*, if he be not *loſt* to all Senſe of *Shame*, to obtrude *ſuch* a Tranſlation upon the Public, as ſhall not contain a ſufficient *Antidote* for any fundamental Error.

Diſputes, it is true, there will always be about Scripture, a Gift not deſigned for ſuch an Uſe, as there have been about *every* Thing *elſe*. And is it a Wonder, Men ſhould diſpute about *Religion*, which is almoſt the *only* Thing, about which it is *worth while* to diſpute at all? If Religion were ſet aſide, would all *Diſputes* immediately ceaſe? No, there would be *many more*, which a ſerious Senſe of it upon our Minds prevents, about Things of *leſs* Importance, about every Thing on which Men had miſplaced their Eſteem. It is a Miſtake to imagine, that the *Obſcurity* of *Scripture* has given Birth to different *Opinions* in *material* Points; Mens preconceived *Opinions* have made them endeavour to *obſcure* and darken the *Scripture*, though never

never ſo plain. However, ſuppoſing the Tranſlation to be juſt and faithful in the main, which it is allowed by all competent Judges to be; the Unlearned may diſtinguiſh between *torturing* the Words of inſpired Writers, preſſing them into their Service, and *compelling them to come in*, in favour of ſome darling Notion; and on the other hand, giving them an *eaſy*, *unforced*, and *natural* Interpretation. They may eaſily perceive, who *impoſe* a *Senſe* upon the Bible, making it ſpeak *their own*; and who are content to *take* one from it. SERM. VII.

Little Minds may be affected with little *Trifles*, with ſome minute Particularity in Scripture, with ſome Text that ſeems unaccountable: They may examine the Bible (to uſe the Alluſion of a great Genius) as it were with a Microſcope, which confines them to a *ſingle Part*; but does not enable them to take in the *Conſiſtency* of the *Whole*, or to perceive the *Relation* which *each* Part has to *another*. A Mind truly *large* and comprehenſive will graſp the *whole Compaſs and Subſtance* of Chriſtianity, and conſider, how happily it has ſupplied the Defects, rectified the Miſtakes, and enforced the Diſcoveries of human Reaſon; carrying

SERM. VII. Religion to ſuch a juſt Degree of Perfection, that whatever falls *ſhort* of it, is jejune and *defective*; and whatever *attempts* to go *beyond* it, is viſionary and *romantic*. The more a Man ſtudies the Scriptures with theſe extenſive Views, the more he will admire them: For they are like thoſe Perſons, whom an intimate *Acquaintance endears*, more and more, whatever Prejudices we might, at *firſt Sight*, have conceived againſt them. He will find, that they afford *as much* Light, as our *Condition needs*; and *much more*, than our *unaſſiſted Faculties could attain to*.

Here is a Book which takes in a *vaſt* Compaſs: It begins *from* Eternity, with the Creation of the World, and the Formation of Man; and ends *in* Eternity, with the laſt Judgment, and the Conſummation of all Things. And yet, throughout, there is one Chain, and regular Series of well-connected Events, from the Fall to the Redemption; and from the Redemption to the laſt grand Revolution, when *all Things ſhall be put under* our Saviour's *Feet*. Amidſt this great *Variety*, there is, juſt as in the Works of Nature, an *Uniformity*; every Thing is *diverſified*, and yet

yet every Thing *regular*. From the *firſt* Institution of *Sacrifices immediately* after the Fall, through ſeveral intermediate Steps, to the grand *univerſal* Sacrifice, which they prefigured, of our Saviour, one uniform Deſign is carried on, *viz.* the Preſervation of true Religion in the World, and the Diſcountenancing of Vice and Idolatry. Now in a Book comprehending ſuch a Train of Diſpenſations, and ſuch a vaſt Extent of Time, written in ſeveral *Ages*, by ſeveral *Hands*, and on ſeveral *Subjects*; it is *not* at all *ſurprizing*, that there ſhould be *many* Things puzzling and unaccountable to us ſhort-ſighted Creatures, (for ſuch there are in the Works of the Creation;) but *it is amazing*, ſuppoſing the Authors of it were not under the immediate Guidance of God, that, notwithſtanding the *ſtricteſt* Scrutiny has been made, notwithſtanding *every particular* Paſſage has been *ſifted*, *no* one *material Flaw* has been diſcovered, that has *endangered* the whole *Fabric*. Nay thoſe very Things, which were *thought inſuperable* Objections againſt it; have, upon a cloſer Examination, been found illuſtrious *Confirmations* of the Truth of it. Do you think, that the *Mahometan*, SERM. VII.

SERM. VII.

the *Pagan*, or any other falſe Religion, could have ſtood their Ground, if Reaſon had had as fair Play againſt *them*, as it has had againſt *Chriſtianity*; if the whole *Artillery* of *reaſoning Malice*, reſolved to leave no Stone unturned, and to find or make Objections at any rate, had been, for many Ages, diſcharged againſt them? *Falſhood* cannot long bear the Shock of an unreſtrained, determined, and powerful *Oppoſition*; and *Truth* itſelf muſt greatly ſuffer, by having all the Weapons of Ridicule and Sophiſtry employed againſt it, in the Opinion of (a conſiderable Number) the half-thinking, injudicious, and inattentive. And if all the Load of Objections and Difficulties induſtriouſly raiſed, like ſo many Weights tied about a Body, cannot ſink Chriſtianity; it muſt be upheld and ſupported by that Energy of Truth, which is ſtronger than all Things, and will prevail.

If there were *one deciſive unanſwerable* Argument *againſt* Chriſtianity, which wounded it in its Vitals; it would be unaccountable, why diſintereſted Men, of diſtinguiſhed Penetration, great Maſters of Reaſon,

Reaſon, who had thoroughly weighed and underſtood the Nature of Evidence, ſhould have inviolably adhered to it, and profeſſed their Belief of it to *the laſt*, and *more* at *laſt* than ever. But it is not at all unaccountable, why ſome few inquiſitive Men, notwithſtanding the deciſive Arguments for it, ſhould have diſbelieved it, or at leaſt endeavoured to diſbelieve it. Becauſe Men of very good Underſtandings may have criminal, and over-violent Attachments, to the Things of this World: And very ſlender and precarious Reaſonings will go a great Way, when Men have a ſtrong Intereſt, and therefore a ſtrong Inclination, to be Diſbelievers: But the Things concerning Religion relate chiefly to another World, are diſtant, and out of Sight: And Men have ſeldom, if ever, ſo ſtrong a Bias that Way, as not to allow Reaſon a fair Hearing. SERM. VII.

Many are the Devices of a Man's Heart, but the Counſel of the Lord, that ſhall ſtand. Many have been the Devices of Men's *Hearts and Heads* againſt Chriſtianity; *from its Youth up have they fought againſt it:* But it is the *Counſel of the Lord*, and

SERM. VII.

therefore *has* hitherto stood, and *will* maintain its Ground.

But to what, you will say, is the Growth of Infidelity owing? Is it not to this, that the Age is *more inquisitive* and *discerning*, and consequently *less* credulous? Alas! the *Spring* of Credulity is not *dried up*; it only flows in *another Channel*. Witness *many Impositions* upon the Public: Witness *those Schemes*, which, within our Memories, have impoverished, if not ruined, several Families. Those, who will not consult the immortal Welfare of their *Souls*, who will not be Adventurers for another better World, upon the sure Bottom of the *Word of God*, how strongly soever attested; yet will trust their *Persons* in the Hands of an *illiterate Pretender to Physic*. If Men be *more scrupulous* of Assent in *religious* Matters, *too liable to Fraud and Imposition in others*; the Reason, I suppose, may, without much Difficulty, be assigned: It is not that we are *less credulous*; we are only *more vicious*. *Credulity* is still the same: The *Objects*, on which it is placed, are only *changed* and diversified. And though *implicit Belief* might be the Fault of former Ages, when Popery prevailed;

implicit Diſbelief is the reigning Folly of the preſent. There is the ſame Quantity of Folly ſtill, juſt as there is of Matter; and, like Matter, it admits of different Modifications, and appears in Variety of Forms. There is no ſurer Way of judging, of the *Senſe* and Diſcernment of an *Age*, than by obſerving the public *Entertainments*, which are moſt in *Vogue*. And, if ſo, then let it be obſerved, that Chriſtianity *decayed*, in an Age and Nation when and where *Taſte* and *Senſe* were at the *loweſt Ebb*; where every rational Entertainment was diſcouraged; and low fantaſtic Performances, without the leaſt Tincture of juſt Thinking, Morality, and Wit, uſurped the Room of them. SERM. VII.

The Cauſe of Infidelity is obvious: It is *Luxury*, which, wherever it got Footing, never failed to eraſe all religious Impreſſions. Thus it was in *Greece*; thus in *Rome* of old, when the *ſenſeleſs* Syſtem of *Epicurus* was patronized by Men of much *greater* and more eminent *Abilities*, than any, that now eſpouſe *Infidelity*. Thus it was even in *Judæa* itſelf, when the Sect of the *Sadducees* prevailed. It may be thought, that the great Number of bad and poiſonous Books,

SERM. VII. Books, has occasioned the great Looseness and Depravation of the Age: But the Truth is, the Looseness and Depravation of the Age, to which bad Writers will always accommodate themselves to give a *current* Value to those Works, which want an *intrinsic* one, has occasioned the Number of poisonous Writings: Not to mention, that they are generally very despicable Authors, almost all, except one, whom one is sorry to see in such bad Company; one who, whatever fine Talents he had, was never remarkable for close and solid Reasoning. Those are the most determined Enemies to Christianity, and indeed to all Religion, whose Thoughts run in one black Channel, *soberly bad*. The Generality of Unbelievers are Men, who have too enlarged a Conversation, too much Vivacity and Quickness to rest in *Generals*; and too little Leisure, Capacity and Application to enter fully into *Particulars*, and examine Things thoroughly. *Hypocrisy* seems to be *transferred* from *revealed* Religion to *natural*, from *Piety* to *Morality*. Morality and Benevolence make a fine and splendid Appearance in the Writings and Conversation of the Deists, but seem to have little or no Influence upon

their Lives; like that Luminary which towards its Decline looks the largeſt, when its Luſtre and Influence are the weakeſt. And it is viſible, that Charity, and even common Honeſty, have decayed together with Chriſtianity, their firmeſt Support. SERM. VII.

A long uninterrupted Flow of Eaſe and Tranquillity has lulled us into a fatal Indolence and Inſenſibility to all religious Notions: Some *ſignal Judgment*; ſome *extraordinary* Indication of the divine Diſpleaſure, ſeems almoſt neceſſary to purge the Nation of its *Droſs*, to *rouſe* it into a ſerious *Senſe* of *Religion*, and make us diſcern and value thoſe Things, *that belong to our Peace, before they be hidden from our Eyes*: Juſt as when the Sky is full of noxious and peſtilential Vapours; ſome violent Hurricane, ſome dreadful Burſts of Thunder are neceſſary to diſperſe them, to clear the infected Air, and reſtore it to its former Serenity.

Eight

Eight SERMONS

On the Evidences of Chriſtianity, the Corruption of our Nature, the Redemption, and the TRINITY.

Preached at the Lady *Moyer*'s Lecture, in the Cathedral of *St. Paul, London*, in the Years 1732 and 1733.

SERMON I.

On the Truth of Chriſtianity.

JOHN III. 2.

Rabbi, we know, that thou art a Teacher, come from God: For no Man can do theſe Miracles, that thou doeſt, except God be with him.

SERM. I.

THE Propoſition contained in the Text is, that ſome Miracles are ſo circumſtanced, as to be direct Evidences of a divine Power. By a Miracle,

SERM. I.

cle, is meant an Effect evident to the Senſes, contrary to the fixed and eſtabliſhed Courſe of Nature. Strange! that *Man* ſhould diſbelieve an Operation *different* from the *preſent Courſe* of Nature; when *Man* himſelf, the *firſt* Man, from whom all the reſt deſcended, could not have been brought into Being, but by an Act of Power *different* from the *Courſe* of *Nature*, as it is now *eſtabliſhed*. For ſome *firſt* Man there muſt be: And, whoever he was, he muſt be brought upon the Theatre of Nature *without Parents*, without any *ſecond* Cauſes, by the *immediate* Power and Will of the *firſt*, or, in other Words, by an Operation, which, if it were not, ſtrictly ſpeaking, a Miracle; was, at leaſt, equivalent to one.

Nor is it at all improbable, that He, who called Man into *Being*, by a *particular* Diſplay of Power, diſtinct from thoſe *general* Laws, which obtain at *preſent*; would exert ſome *unuſual* and uncommon Acts of Power for (what was of greater Importance than his mere Being) his *Well-Being*, his *eternal* Well-Being.

In the Proſecution of this Subject,

I*ſt*,

Iſt, I ſhall attempt to ſhew, that ſeveral Miracles are deciſive Proofs of a divine Power. SERM. I.

IIdly, That we have ſufficient Evidence, that ſuch Miracles were wrought for the Confirmation of Religion.

Iſt, I ſhall attempt to ſhew, that ſeveral Miracles are deciſive Proofs of a divine Power.

What Powers evil Spirits may have, and what is the utmoſt Extent of *their* Abilities; it is beyond the Extent of *ours*, in all Caſes, to determine: But that God would ſuffer them to exert thoſe Powers in working ſuperior and uncontroled Miracles; this I cannot admit: Becauſe God is too good to permit ſuch a *Snare* to be laid for the Bulk of Mankind, who will be always governed more by what affects their Senſes, than by thoſe Arguments, which addreſs themſelves coldly to their Underſtandings. *Striking* and *pompous* Miracles, though they enforced a Doctrine ſeemingly abſurd, would dazzle and overpower the Soul, and force an Admittance for it into the Mind: Whereas dry and abſtracted

SERM. I.

abſtracted Reaſonings operate but ſlowly and languidly in Compariſon. He, who could raiſe the Dead, and ſuſpend the Laws of Nature, would convince the Generality of Men much ſooner, than if he brought ſeveral Demonſtrations to ſupport what he advanced.

I cannot then believe, that God would permit evil Beings to work conſiderable Miracles, without aſſerting the Superiority of his Power; becauſe this would unavoidably miſlead the Groſs of the Species into Error. I cannot likewiſe believe it, for another Reaſon, becauſe it would invalidate and weaken the ſtrongeſt Proofs of his Providence.

For either we muſt ſay, that *no finite Effects* whatever bear the Impreſs of the *Deity*, and prove an infinite Being at the Helm, (which is to diſcard all the Arguments *a poſteriori*;) or ſuch *aſtoniſhing Notices of Power*, as our *Saviour* and *Moſes*, and others gave, bid as fair for the Proof of it, as any *Phænomena*.

For why may we not as well believe, that finite Beings are empowered to make the Sun, or other Planets; *revolve* in their *Orbit*, and go their everlaſting Round; as that

that they are empowered to *arreſt* the Courſe of the Sun (or the Earth,) make it go *backwards*, or eclipſe it, when the Moon is at the full? Let us conſider the Caſe of *Joſhua* ſtopping the Sun. If the Laws, by which the material World is governed, be nothing, as is generally agreed, but God's *ſtanding* and *uniform* Operation upon Matter; I aſk, did God ſuſpend his Action upon the Sun, when it was ſtopped; or did he not? If he did, then he wrought the Miracle; for the Miracle was nothing but the Suſpenſion of the Laws of Nature: But if he did not, if he ſtill continued his regular Action; then it ſeems, there was another Being concerned, who over-ruled his Power, or at leaſt kept it at Bay; and Polytheiſm will be unavoidable.

The ſame kind of Reaſoning may be applied to other miraculous Facts. I could as ſoon believe, that evil Spirits might *call* me *into* Being, and ſet the *Springs* of Nature a *going at firſt*; as that they can raiſe me when dead, *re-animate* a Lump of ſenſeleſs Matter, and remand my Soul, when it is in the Hand of God, to its former Lodging refitted up. No Creature can come into, or be reſtored to Being,

SERM. I.

but by him, who is the Fountain of all Beings.

He that had Power to create *Bread* two ſeveral Times, to ſatisfy ſome thouſands, might have Power to create the *whole World*; there being no more Impoſſibility in the one, than in the other. Either then creative and providential Powers are no divine Powers; or elſe theſe Effects likewiſe bear the Stamp of the Deity.

If the Sick may be healed, and the Deaf made to hear by an inferior Being; can *the Maimed be made whole*; (*Matthew* xv. 31.) or a loſt Limb reſtored? He, who produced and preſerves that infinitely complicated Engine, the human *Body*, can alone form or reſtore any *Member* of it. For in *each* Member of it there is a curious interweaving of endleſs Fibres, there are continual Streams running to and from each Part of it, through an Infinity of Canals, to convey Nutrition throughout: Each Member maintains a conſtant Correſpondence with the Head and the Heart; it is the Inſtrument or Occaſion of exciting certain Senſations in the Soul, and is enabled, by an incredible Activity, to execute her Orders, as ſoon as ſhe iſſues them out, and wills

wills the Motion of the Hand or Foot, or any other Part: A Power to be derived *only* from Him, who *commands*, and it is immediately done. SERM. I.

It may be of ſome Importance to inquire, whether it be conſiſtent with God's Wiſdom to intruſt any Beings, much leſs evil ones, with ſuch ample Powers, as to reſerve to himſelf no diſtinctive Characters of his own Power; whether this be not to give up the moſt valuable Branches of his Prerogative, and in effect to unking himſelf: Whether this would not be the Caſe, if evil Spirits might perform all the Miracles recorded from *Geneſis* to the *Apocalypſe*. For if no ſuch *ſupernatural* Notices, no ſuch undeniable *Change* of Nature, carry evident Marks and Impreſſions of the Deity; then the *conſiſtent uniform* Workings of God, according to eſtabliſhed Laws, cannot prove the Deity; and if they cannot prove it, then we are left, to all Appearance, in a *fatherleſs* and forlorn World. We may then be as ſure that ſuch Miracles could be wrought by none but God, as we are, that the World is governed by God.

But farther, the Argument for the Unity of God is this, that *one* Being is *ſufficient* to produce all the *Phænomena* in Nature, and therefore we have no Occaſion to ſuppoſe any *more* than one: Which Argument is enforced by the *ſimilis Ratio*, Analogy, and Harmony, which runs throughout Nature, as far as the Sphere of our Obſervation extends. But if another Being can give as glaring Indications of Power, in a ſupernatural Manner, as are ſhewn in the ordinary Courſe of Nature, if he can break through that *ſimilis Ratio* and Harmony; then this Argument muſt be diſmiſſed as inconcluſive. For the Manifeſtation of two diſtinct equal Powers muſt lead us to the Acknowledgment of two diſtinct equal Beings.

The ſtanding Miracle of the *Sabbatical* or ſeventh Year, well deſerves our Conſideration; when the Land lying uncultivated, the Produce of the Earth in one Year (the ſixth,) according to *Moſes*'s Promiſe, *Lev.* xxv. 21. was to be thrice as much as uſual, or Proviſion for three Years. Now either this Miracle was performed, or not. If not, then the whole Body of the *Jews* muſt have a flagrant Proof, that

their

their Lawgiver was an Impoſtor, and conſequently, muſt have been ſo far from believing him, that they would have been a Nation of Infidels. Nay, they could not actually have obſerved the *Sabbatical* Year, according to his Directions, upon a Failure of his Promiſe. But if this Miracle was performed, then it muſt be the Lord's doing: For God would never ſuffer any evil Spirit, for ſuch a long Tract of Time, for ſeveral Centuries, by an oft-repeated Exemplification of his Power to do thrice as much in a ſupernatural Manner; as he himſelf did in one Year, in the ordinary Courſe of his Providence. It is as certain then, that no ſuch Miracles could be wrought by any evil Spirit; as that there are not two diſtinct independent Beings at the Helm. Where there is an infinite Diſproportion of Power between two Beings, there muſt be ſome ſufficient Marks of Diſtinction, to aſcertain, which of them acts. It cannot therefore be impoſſible to hit the dividing Point, between the little puny Fears of evil Spirits, and the auguſt Diſplay of divine Power. But if ſuch an uninterrupted Series of unparalleled Miracles, as our Saviour did, do not point out to us

SERM. I.

the appropriate Enſigns of the Deity; what others can we ſingle out as ſufficiently and peculiarly expreſſive of his Majeſty? The moſt aſtoniſhing Idea we can conceive of the moſt aſtoniſhing Being that is, is, that he brings about Things, by the mere Act and *Fiat* of his Will, without any tedious, ſlow, gradual Proceſs; that it is as eaſy for him to *effect* whatever he wills, as it is to *will* any Effect. But behold another, if he were another, uſurps his ſovereign Stile: *I will, be thou clean. Lazarus, come forth:* It is ſpoke, it is done: Nature hears his Voice, and, confeſſing her Author, inſtantly obeys the dread Command.

Thoſe ſettled and eſtabliſhed Rules, by which God governs the material World, being for the general Good of the Whole, God will never act by particular Wills, and Miracles in numerous, open, unconteſted Inſtances; nor will he ſuffer others to act by them, but for ſome ſuperior and prepollent Good, which cannot be attained but by a Deviation from the ſettled Courſe of Nature. Either then the Miracles were wrought for ſome ſuperior Good; or they were not. If they were, then there is no abſolute Neceſſity to ſuppoſe other Beings concerned;

concerned: It was not beneath the Deity to interpoſe; it was no Proſtitution of his Power and Dignity, but an Act of Condeſcenſion and Goodneſs worthy of himſelf. If they were not for ſome prepollent Good; then he would not ſuffer them to be wrought at all: Since if evil Beings might, for no prepollent Good, interrupt the Courſe of Nature, and turn Things into another Channel, all human Affairs muſt ſtand ſtill, all our Induſtry muſt ſtagnate, and all our Prudence be ſuperſeded. For where every Thing in the Courſe of Nature was precarious, where there was no regular Conduct or Providence; no regular and well-concerted Means could be of any Service, to procure any deſirable End, or avert any Evil. Wiſdom, and Folly, Carefulneſs, and Idleneſs, would be upon a Level; if Beings of a ſuperior Nature were left at large, to diſconcert, unſettle, and embroil every Thing. I can eaſily ſee, that God may ſacrifice the Uniformity and Harmony of his Providence, upon ſome uncommon Exigency; the Love of the *Happineſs* of his Creatures being ſuperior to his Love of *Order*: But that he ſhould ſuffer a Set of evil Spirits to break through that magnifi-

Serm. I.

cent Simplicity, and regular Variety, which conſtitute Beauty; that he ſhould ſuffer an Impoſtor to go on in a continued Series of unrivalled Miracles, to raiſe the Dead, and himſelf, to confer the ſame Powers on his Followers, and to enable them to ſpeak all Languages; and all this with a Deſign to deceive a Set of Creatures, who may be, and are, every Day deceived, without the Expence of one Miracle; is a Suppoſition highly injurious to the Wiſdom of the Deity, which has given Things a Law, which ſhall not be broken upon every ſlight Occaſion. It is in *Nature*, as in a *Poem*: The great Author of it may break through ſet *formal Rules*, when a greater Beauty may be compaſſed by *ſwerving* from them, than by *ſcrupulouſly adhering* to them. But then he will never permit others to break through his regular Adjuſtment of Things, and blend their own Performances promiſcuouſly with his. I grant that evil inviſible Beings may be the Miniſters of God's Vengeance, as well as viſible Beings are; nay, they are much properer Inſtruments, as their Intellects are clearer, their Reaſon more extenſive, and their Powers more enlarged. But all this may be done conſiſtently with the

the Laws of Nature; at leaſt without any notorious uncontroled Breach of them. SERM. I.

To theſe Miracles of *Power* we may add Prophecies, which are Miracles of *Knowledge*. Now, how God himſelf ſhould certainly foreſee uncertain Events, is unconceivable by us; but it is abſolutely impoſſible, that any ſuch Degree of Knowledge ſhould be lodged in finite Beings. Yet there are ſeveral ſuch Prophecies as ſuppoſe infallible Knowledge of contingent Events; and, conſequently, muſt be aſcribed to God alone. Such is the Prophecy about *Cyrus* by Name, and what he would do, above an hundred Years before he was born, *Iſaiah*'s Prophecy concerning our Saviour's Sufferings, a Prophecy ſo very punctual, that, if we were not certain of the contrary, one would ſuſpect that the Author had lived after our Saviour, and had nothing to do but to adjuſt the pretended Prophecy to the Event. Such is our Saviour's Prediction concerning the unexampled Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, and the Diſperſion of the *Jews*, till the *Fulneſs of the Gentiles ſhould come in*.

There then is no queſtion, but, if the Miracles were wrought, they were wrought by God himſelf: Which brings me to the

II*d*

SERM. I. II*d* Point, which was to prove, we have ſufficient Evidence the Miracles were actually wrought.

And in order to this, I need not prove, that the Apoſtles could not be deceived themſelves, ſince they were Eye-Witneſſes of our Saviour's Miracles; much leſs could they be deceived, as to the Miracles they themſelves performed, particularly as to that of the Gift of Tongues. For they muſt have had as much an *internal Conſciouſneſs*, that they could on a ſudden underſtand and ſpeak a Variety of Languages, which they never learned; as they had an internal Conſciouſneſs of their own Exiſtence. They muſt have an intimate Feeling of what paſſed within them.

My Buſineſs ſhall be to ſhew,

1*ſt*, That the Apoſtles had no Intereſt to deceive others: and

2*dly*, That they could not have deceived Mankind if they would.

1*ſt*, Then I am to prove, That the Apoſtles had no Intereſt to deceive others.

If

If Chriſtianity was an Impoſture, it was a ſtrange Impoſture indeed; an Impoſture beneficial to the World, but deſtructive to the Authors, in the Nature and Tendency of the Thing itſelf: Beneficial I ſay to the World, ſince it forbad every Vice, and enjoined every Virtue, that could make a Man more happy in himſelf, more ſerviceable to the World, and more acceptable to God. But as viſibly, in its genuine Conſequences, deſtructive to the Authors; ſince they could not expect to impeach the Juſtice of the Jewiſh Government, by charging the Crime of Murder, the Murder of the *Prince of Life* upon the Rulers, to diſturb publick Settlements, and unhinge national Religions with Impunity; ſince they knew, from the Indignities their Maſter met with, that they were to promote it at the Expence of whatever was dear and valuable to them in this Life; ſince the Pagan Prieſts would every where work up the Dregs of the Populace into a Ferment, againſt the Propagators of a Religion, which could not take place but at the Expence of their Intereſt.

It may be ſaid, the Apoſtles were actuated by Ambition: They were impatient

SERM. I.

to ſet themſelves above the *undiſtinguiſhed Many*, and to ſhew the Superiority of their Parts by diſſenting from the Common Herd.

It is granted, that Ambition is ſometimes as predominant in the Vulgar, as it is in Men of Letters, or Heroes: But then it operates in a quite different Manner, and flows in another Channel.

For inſtance, an ignorant Peaſant, who has had a narrow and confined Education, may be deſirous to be the Oracle of the Village, in which he lives, and to get and maintain an Aſcendant over it. This would probably be the Height of his Ambition: It could never enter into his Head, if he were in his Senſes, without the Advantages of a refined Converſation, or the Knowledge of Books, to erect himſelf into a Teacher of many Nations. The Philoſopher indeed might be tempted to enlarge the Scene of Action, and to ſpread his Fame and Knowledge throughout the World: But a Deſire of Diſtinction in poor unlettered Men of common Senſe, is confined within a narrower Sphere, it never prompts them to take the *World* for their *Theatre*, and *Mankind* for their *Audience*.

If

If then the Apoſtles were Men of common Senſe, which is plain from that excellent Syſtem of Morality, which they have left us, explained in the cleareſt Precepts, enforced by the ſtrongeſt Motives, and exemplified by the brighteſt Pattern; they could not, were their Paſſion for Glory never ſo ſtrong, merely upon the Strength of that Motive, have formed a wild romantic Project of propagating a new Religion among the polite, as well as barbarous Nations, without either Riches or Power to *obtrude* their Sentiments upon the World, or Art and Addreſs to *inſinuate* them.

No, if they had not been ſwayed by a Principle of Obedience to their Creator, and a well-grounded Belief in him, that he would proſper their Endeavour; that Attempt, *viz.* for a few defenceleſs ignorant Men to change the Religions of all the Earth, by introducing a rational Devotion, and a pure Morality, had been a kind of *religious Knight-Errantry*, which ſome frantic *Enthuſiaſts* might have ſet on foot; but was inconſiſtent with their Character, who ſpoke the Words of Soberneſs and Truth. Then theſe were the true Springs of their Actions, a ſettled Conviction

Serm. I.

tion of the Truth of the Reſurrection, a firm Confidence that they repoſed in their Maker and Saviour, and a certain Expectation of Heavenly Rewards in Reverſion. Had they not believed the Truth of the Reſurrection, and that God would give a Sanction to it by Miracles; Vain-Glory, it is certain, could not prompt them to embark in an Attempt which, they could not but foreſee, muſt terminate in their Diſgrace and Defeat; they being in themſelves very incompetent Inſtruments, to occaſion ſo great a Revolution in Religion.

Beſides, it is plain Ambition could never have been their Motive: Had they indeed pretended to preach and write from their *own Fund* of Senſe, and to ſtrike out an intirely *new* Track of Thought, without treading ſervilely in the Steps of another; then there had been ſome Colour for taxing them with Vain-Glory: But, inſtead of this, they diſclaim the Vanity of being thought *Originals*: They refer all the Glory of being the *firſt Author* of theſe beneficial Truths to their Lord and Maſter: He was the *Maſter Builder* who laid the Plan; they deſire only to be conſidered as

Under-

Under-Agents and Workmen; a Character, to which ambitious Men are not willing to ſtoop: They every where make our Saviour the immediate *Fountain-Head* of that Knowledge which watered and enriched the World; they only pretend to be the *Channels*, through which it was conveyed.

There are few or no other public Actions, but what a witty Malice may put ſome ſiniſter Interpretation upon; and the beſt Deeds in Appearance *may*, and often, no queſtion, *do*, proceed from a Principle of Vanity: But the Actions of the Apoſtles will ſtand the Teſt of the ſevereſt Scrutiny. For they could not act upon any indirect and intereſted Views of worldly Honour, Ambition, or Gain; they muſt have been ſupported by a determined Reſolution of Mind, to bear the utmoſt Preſſures of Miſery and Torment, in the Cauſe of Truth, founded upon a Proſpect of future Happineſs. So far are they from conſulting the Dignity of human Nature, who deny the Truth of Chriſtianity, that they do, what in them lies, to rob us of the moſt inconteſtable Examples of human Virtue, and conſequently to depreciate our Nature.

SERM. I.

It is objected indeed, whereas the primitive Witnesses sealed their Testimony with their Blood; that Consideration does not weigh much, since several Criminals have persisted to the last in the Denial of known Facts.

To this I answer, that these Wretches generally do it with the Prospect of a Pardon or a Reprieve. But pray, which of these hardened Creatures would persevere to attest, what he knew to be false, provided a Pardon was offered, if he would confess the Truth? Yet this was the Case of the Apostles: They might at any Time have preserved their Lives, by laying open the Cheat, if it had been one: Nay, in the first Council, that of the *Jews*, before which they were convened, all that was desired of them was, that they should preach no more in the Name of *Jesus*.

He that can produce one Instance of a *Man* that would rather part with his Life, than retract what he knew to be false, when he might save his Life by retracting; must find some History as yet unknown to the learned World. Much less can a Number of such Men be produced, who all, with an inflexible Stubbornness, with an *unconquerable*

querable Spirit, were conſiſtent from firſt to laſt, till Death cloſed the Scene, without one of them throwing off the Maſk. I have often heard that Terrors and Torments have made a Man *abjure* what he knew to be *true*; but I never heard, that they had ſomething ſo inviting in them, as to make a Man, much leſs a Number of Men, maintain what they were conſcious was a *Falſhood*, a *Falſhood unprofitable* to them, when they might have been reſcued from Death by recanting. There is then this material Difference: Criminals either, in the firſt place, falſify with an Intention to ſave themſelves from the Stroke of Juſtice; whereas the Apoſtles brought their Lives, knowingly and wilfully, into imminent Danger; nay, actually loſt them, for nothing but perſevering to atteſt the Truth, unawed by any Terrors, unallured by Hopes of Pardon: Or ſecondly, Malefactors have died, as they lived, under an Inſenſibility of each good and virtuous Impreſſion. Groſs and heavy Minds, that think of nothing *in* this World but what ſtrikes their Senſes, may think of nothing *beyond* this World: But the Apoſtles muſt have lived an exemplary Life, and in an

SERM. I.

SERM. I.

uninterrupted Tenour of Virtue. For a profligate and immoral Life would have blaſted their Credit as much, as the Detection of a notorious Falſhood. And it is not to be ſuppoſed, that Men of exemplary Lives, who in their Writings inculcate the juſteſt and therefore the nobleſt Sentiments of the Deity, and a ſtrict Regard to Truth, would die with a Falſhood in their Mouths.

I own that Enthuſiaſm will put Men upon deſperate Attempts. But then the Apoſtles could *not* have been *Enthuſiaſts*. For they muſt have had an abſolute Certainty, whether our Saviour was riſen, after ſuch oft-repeated, laſting, ſenſible Evidence of his being alive, after having ſeen, handled, and felt him: They muſt be intimately conſcious (the higheſt Degree of Certainty) whether they could ſpeak all Languages, agreeably to his Promiſe after his riſing from the Dead, *viz.* that they ſhould be *endued with Power from on High*. If they then aſſerted theſe Things without any Foundation, they *knew* what they aſſerted to be falſe. Now he is *not* an *Enthuſiaſt*, who aſſerts what he *knows* to be falſe; he is ſomething *worſe*.

That

That Charge being dismissed, the only tolerable Motive that can be assigned, is that of Vain-Glory, which I have already disproved. For it is plain to the Force of a Demonstration, that they were not influenced by other worldly Views; when they knew, that renouncing Ease and Pleasure, their Country and Friends, they were to face Poverty, Bonds, and Death, under their most forbidding and frightful Appearances. *I think*, says St. *Paul*, *that God hath set forth us the Apostles last, as it were appointed to Death: For we are made a Spectacle to the World and unto Angels and Men.—Even unto this present Hour we both hunger and thirst, and are naked and are buffeted, and have no certain Dwelling-Place, and labour working with our Hands; we are reviled, persecuted and defamed; we are made as the Filth of the World, and the Off-scouring of all Things.* 1 Cor. iv. 9, *&c.* SERM. I.

Hear what *Clemens Romanus*, Contemporary with the Apostles, says, in his first Epistle to the *Corinthians*, the most valuable Monument of Christian Antiquity, next to the inspired Writings. "It was "of unjust Envy, that *Peter* suffered, not "one or two, but several Pains; and hav-

SERM. I.

" ing undergone Martyrdom, is gone into " the Place of Glory, which was due to " him. It is out of Envy (continues the " ſame Author) that *Paul* got the Prize " of Patience, having been put ſeven " Times in Irons, ſtoned, and ſcourged; " being the Herald of the Goſpel in the " *Eaſt* and *Weſt*, he made his Faith fa- " mous. Having taught the *whole World* " Juſtice, and being come to the *Extre-* " *mity of the Weſt*, when he had ſuffered " Martyrdom before the Chief of the " State, he went out of the World *." Theſe are the Words of an Author, who had no Temptations to falſify, and living in the ſame Age with the Apoſtles, could not want an Opportunity to inform himſelf of the Truth of what he delivers. Since then the Apoſtles were not ſwayed by Vain-Glory, or other worldly Conſiderations; they muſt have been either acted by a diſintereſted Love of Pain and Miſery, contrary to the known Workings of human Nature, contrary to the firſt Principle, that of Self-Preſervation, and an invincible Deſire of Happineſs: Or they muſt have been ſwayed by a ſettled Conviction of the

* Cotelerii Patres Apoſtolici. *Vol.* I. *Pag.* 150, 151.

Truth

Truth of the Reſurrection, and animated by the Hopes of an everlaſting Weight of Glory. Theſe are the only aſſignable Springs of Action. SERM. I.

Diſbelievers would be thought to be great Patrons of ſocial Morality: But one cannot well conceive how Society, and conſequently ſocial Morality, can ſubſiſt upon their Principles, which are fruitful of Diſtruſt and Jealouſy. They, who can impiouſly believe the *Apoſtles* to have been Deceivers and Knaves, muſt, if conſiſtent with themſelves, believe *every one* elſe to be ſo too, as far as he has Capacity and Opportunity. They who can entertain a Doubt of the *Apoſtles* Honeſty, after the *ſtrongeſt* Proofs of their Integrity, that *they* could poſſibly give, or *Mankind* require, muſt entertain a *general undiſtinguiſhing* Suſpicion of every Perſon about them.

Add to this, that a Vein of Simplicity runs throughout their whole Compoſure, and Nature, void of Art, ſpeaks in every Line. And whatever critical Skill and Accuracy in *Languages* they might want; they every where ſeem to ſpeak, what is more eſtimable than all the Languages beſides, the Language of the *Heart*: They never

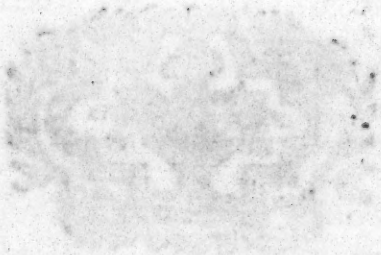
SERM. I.

caſt in Shades, what might appear too bold, glaring, and incredible at the firſt tranſient View: They never ſmooth the Way and prepare the Reader, for what might ſeem offenſive: They every where leave the *Actions* to *ſpeak*, and their *Readers* to *judge*, for *themſelves*. Plain honeſt *Truth* wants *no artificial Colourings*; and *Falſhood* is apt to *betray itſelf*, by laying them on *too thick*. Truth ſhines with *unborrowed* Beauties, and *has no need* of foreign Ornaments: But on Falſhood, which has *no Comelineſs* in itſelf, Men *beſtow the more abundant Comelineſs*. Here they laviſh out all their Art, prodigal of Decorations, to divert the Eye from attending to its genuine Deformity.

The Evidence ſtill riſes higher, if we conſider that the Truth of the miraculous Facts in Scripture-Hiſtory, is proved by Events ſubſequent to them; which Events, *viz.* the Propagation and Eſtabliſhment of Chriſtianity, could never have taken place, unleſs the miraculous Facts had been true: For it was as impoſſible, that the twelve Apoſtles ſhould propagate Chriſtianity, againſt the united Forces of *Jews* and *Gentiles*, Magiſtrates and Philoſophers; as that twelve unarmed Men ſhould defeat the whole

whole *Roman* Army. The Relation therefore, which the Scripture gives us, of Miracles, must be true: Because, without a Supposition of Miracles actually performed, we cannot rationally account for that great Turn in religious Affairs, which not very long after followed, *viz.* The Subversion of Pagan Idolatry in Part, and the Introduction of the Worship of God in Spirit and in Truth. SERM. I.

But this Argument for the Truth of Christianity falls under my next Head, and must be reserved for another Discourse.



SERMON II.

Preached at the

Lady *MOYER*'s LECTURE.

On the Evidences of Chriſtianity.

JOHN III. 2.

Rabbi, we know, that thou art a Teacher, come from God: For no Man can do theſe Miracles, that thou doeſt, except God be with him,

I Have already proved in a former Diſcourſe, that Miracles may be ſo circumſtanced, as to be direct and deciſive Evidences of a divine Power and Commiſſion.—That it was *abſolutely* impoſſible the Apoſtles ſhould be deceived themſelves, as Witneſſes of our Saviour's Miracles and their own.—That it was *morally* impoſſible

SERM. II.

SERM. II.

ſible they ſhould attempt to deceive others. ——The Subject of my preſent Diſcourſe is to prove, that the Apoſtles could not have deceived Mankind if they would; nor have impoſed a falſe Religion upon the World, by virtue of a pretended Commiſſion from Heaven.

If the Chriſtian Religion, containing Doctrines *unpalatable* to Fleſh and Blood, void of *every Advantage*, beſides its own internal Excellency, to recommend it, and clogged with a great many *Incumbrances*, could carry Conviction with it *from Eaſt to Weſt*, by ſuch *incompetent* Inſtruments, in ſo *ſhort* a Time, in ſpite of the *moſt reſolved Oppoſition*: If this Plant, from a *ſlender* Appearance at firſt, grew, and waxed a *great Tree*, when no *kindly Sunſhine* of worldly Power yet ſmiled upon it; nay, when the *Inclemency* of the Seaſon beat hard againſt it; the Growth of it was undoubtedly marvellous.

It is granted, that in Matters of pure *Speculation*, the Bulk of Mankind may be, and often are, deceived; becauſe they have not Leiſure or Capacity, to unravel ſtudied Sophiſtry, and nicely to diſtinguiſh between what is plauſible, and what is ſolid and ſubſtantial:

ſubſtantial: But the Caſe is different as to Miracles, which are *Matters of Fact*, that fall under the Cognizance of our *Senſes*. Here the Vulgar and the Learned are equally competent Judges, and you can perſuade neither of them to believe he ſees a glaring Fact, which he does not actually behold. Either then the Apoſtles wrought ſuch Matters of Fact; or they did not. If they did, then they were inveſted with a Power from God: For evil Spirits would not, if they could, empower them to beat down Idolatry: If they did not, then it is unaccountable, how a Set of Fiſhermen, deſpiſed for their Poverty, and odious upon the account of their Nation, ſhould propagate through many Nations, not to ſay the whole known World, ſuch an unlikely Story as this, *viz.* That one, who was crucified as a common Malefactor in *Judæa*, was to be adored as a God; and that too at ſuch a Juncture of Time, when their numerous Converts in ſeveral Parts of the World, ſome of whom were Men of known Diſtinction and Opulency, (ſuch as *Dionyſius of the Areopagus*, *Joſeph* of the *Jewiſh Sanhedrim*, *Sergius Paulus* a *Proconſul*, *Flavius Clemens* a *Roman Conſul*, &c.)

SERM. II.

&c.) who had, very probably, enjoyed one continued Sunſhine of Proſperity; muſt bid adieu to all the Blandiſhments of Life, undergo whatever is diſtaſteful to human Nature, and either ſuffer, or be in danger of ſuffering Martyrdom.

I would gladly have the Deiſts try the Experiment: Let them ſend the ableſt they can ſingle out of their numerous Fraternity to broach ſuch a like Story: For Inſtance, that one, who ſuffered in *England* for a Malefactor, is riſen from the Dead, and is to be worſhipped as the Saviour of Mankind: Let them ſend them to *Portugal* or *Spain*, where the Inquiſition reigns, and where as exquiſite Tortures will be applied to them, as were to the primitive Martyrs. It is eaſy to ſee the Conſequence; They themſelves would meet with a very *warm* Reception; but their Doctrine with a very *cold* one; Both would be involved in the ſame Doom, both periſh and come to nought. If then the Apoſtles had not a Power of working genuine Miracles, and diſplaying the ampleſt Credentials of divine Power; it will be the greateſt Miracle of all, that without either Riches to bribe, Authority to awe, or acquired Knowledge

and

and Dexterity to over-reach Men into a Compliance with their Notions, they ſhould pave the Way to ſo general and great a Turn in religious Affairs; when theſe boaſted Maſters of Reaſon, the Deiſts, theſe Men of large Views, who by an uncommon Superiority of Soul have diſengaged themſelves from the Prejudices of Education, would not be able to bring over a Majority of Men, nay, perhaps, not one Man of common Senſe in any one Nation; if they ſhould ſet on foot ſuch another unpromiſing Project. SERM. II.

Let us ſuppoſe, that a Perſon in our Days ſhould embark in a Deſign of cancelling all the old Religions, and building a new one upon their Ruins; that, to compaſs this Deſign, he pretended to raiſe the Dead, make the Blind ſee, the Lame walk, the Deaf hear, *&c.* that not long after his Death, his Followers publiſh a punctual circumſtantial Relation of all theſe Things, mentioning the *Places where*, the *Perſons upon whom*, the *Witneſſes before* whom, theſe Miracles were ſaid to be wrought: Let us put the Caſe, that they too pretended to have the ſame miraculous Powers veſted in them, and that their Doctrine gained

Footing

SERM. II.

Footing every where, not only in *England*, but in foreign Countries: Would the Magiſtracy, and thoſe whoſe Intereſt was at ſtake, remain unactive in ſuch a critical Juncture, and ſuffer the People to be ſeduced by ſuch over-bearing Pretenſions? No, certainly: They would ſend, which might be eaſily done, to the *Places where*, the *Perſons upon whom*, and the *Witneſſes before whom*, thoſe aſtoniſhing Notices of divine Power were ſaid to be diſplayed: They would take down the Depoſitions of creditable and ſubſtantial Witneſſes in *every Place*, that the Dead were *not* raiſed, nor the Sick cured *there*, nor Thouſands fed in a miraculous Manner, *&c.* They would circulate and diſperſe theſe Atteſtations, and ſend the Antidote, wherever the Infection was ſpread.

Now I aſk, Did the *Jewiſh* and *Pagan* Magiſtracy and Prieſthood, upon the firſt Publication of the Facts, when the Goſpel began to ſpread, take theſe *eaſy* Meaſures, which *Common Senſe* ſuggeſted, to ſuppreſs Chriſtianity, and confront its Evidence? If they did, then Chriſtianity muſt have been ſtifled and overlaid in its Infancy, by the Weight of ſeveral Thouſands of diſintereſted

tereſted Witneſſes, giving it under their Hands, that no ſuch glaring Actions were publickly done. This, I ſay, muſt have been the Conſequence, if the Facts had been falſe; eſpecially when all the Engines of worldly Power were applied againſt it. If they did *not* take this eaſy Method; they *virtually* and *implicitly* owned the Truth of the Facts: They confeſſed the World was *not deceived*; becauſe, if it had been ſo, they neither wanted Power nor Inclination to *undeceive* it. SERM. II.

But it is objected, that ſuch Accounts were publiſhed, which the Chriſtians, when they got the Power into their Hands, wiſely took care to ſuppreſs. To which I anſwer; When did the Chriſtians get the Power into their Hands? Why, after Chriſtianity had ſtood the Shock, and outlived the Rage of ten long Perſecutions. But this does not at all invalidate what I ſaid, *viz.* That Chriſtianity muſt have been overlaid in its *Infancy*, by the Weight of authentic Accounts, well atteſted againſt its Truth: Whereas then it was too late; it had taken the deeper Root, by weathering out the Storm. Beſides, this is *gratis dictum*; there are no Traces left of any Books, that

SERM. II.

that ever denied the Facts; no Mention of them occurs any where. We have indeed ſome Remains of *Celſus*, *Hierocles*, *Porphyry*, and *Julian*, declared Enemies to Chriſtianity. But what they alledge does not amount to a Denial of the Facts: So far are they from that, that they aſcribe the Miracles of our Saviour to Magic, and the *Jews* in the *Talmud*, juſt as their Forefathers do in the New Teſtament, to a Correſpondence or Intercourſe with the Devil.

To account for the Riſe and Propagation of Chriſtianity, our Adverſaries have recourſe to *falſe* Miracles, which they ſay are very common among Chriſtians. By Chriſtians here, they mean the *Papiſts*: But if Popiſh Prieſts chuſe to act their pretended Miracles in *By-Places*, in Cloyſters, or at leaſt only before Men of their *own Perſuaſion*, where they have the *Power* in their Hands, to *fence* off an impartial *Enquiry* into them; and yet their pious Frauds have been generally detected: If, notwithſtanding their confeſſed *Depth* of *Art* and *Fineſſe* to execute a well-concerted Project, they have never attempted to do a Wonder in the Eye of a *Proteſtant Nation*, before a great

a great Concourſe of *Hereticks*, as they call us; then I deſire to know, how a Set of *unpoliſhed* Men, *unpractiſed* in *ſtudied* Wiles and *myſterious Frauds*, ſhould audaciouſly and ſucceſsfully carry on a flagrant Cheat, in the Eye of Thouſands of its moſt inveterate Foes, the Prieſts and Rulers of the *Jewiſh* Nation, and indeed the Rulers and Prieſts of every other Nation, who wanted neither *Diſcernment* enough to *unmaſk* and expoſe it, if it had been ſuch, nor *Power* to *cruſh* and ſtifle it. This, I ſay, was impoſſible, if their Miracles had been Impoſtures, and therefore they were not ſo. And ſince the Diſcovery of Impoſtures has *ſtaggered* the Faith of ſome *weak* Men, and made them look upon Chriſtianity in the ſame *diſadvantageous* Light; I will venture to ſay, that the more *numerous* the *Impoſtures* are, which are *diſcovered*; the more *Chriſtianity* is *confirmed* thereby: Becauſe it proves, that no *Impoſture* can ſtand the Teſt of a *ſevere Examination*, when Men of *Power* and *Policy* vigorouſly *intereſt* themſelves in the *Detection* of it, and are reſolved to go to the *Bottom* of *it*. *Impoſtures* need only to be *held up to the Light*, to be *ſeen through*: But Chriſtianity, the

SERM. II.

SERM. II.

more *thoroughly* it was *canvaſſed*, and the more *vigorouſly* it was *oppoſed*, the *more* it gained *Footing* in the World. There is then this Difference between an *Impoſture* and a *genuine* Miracle. The former loves *Obſcurity*; the latter is deſirous to be ſet in the *ſtrongeſt Point* of *View*, and challenges the neareſt Inſpection of the moſt penetrating Judge.

Beſides, *Tacitus*, an Heathen Hiſtorian, aſſures us, that in *Nero*'s Reign, but thirty Years after our Saviour's Reſurrection, there was *(ingens Multitudo)* a prodigious Multitude of Chriſtians at *Rome*, above two thouſand Miles from *Jeruſalem*; that *Nero* inflicted upon them the moſt *exquiſite* Puniſhments; and particularly, that they were burnt to give Light in the Streets, when Day-light failed.

What ſhall we ſay, as to that prodigious Multitude, who, in *Nero*'s Reign, were *faithful unto Death*, unwearied by Toils, unſhaken by Miſery, and undiſmayed by Terrors, even by Death the *King of Terrors? They could not be miſtaken*; ſince they who converſed with the Apoſtles, *muſt know*, whether they made good their Pretenſions to a miraculous Power, or not; or,

or, in other Words, whether they were Impoſtors, or Perſons commiſſioned by God. Did they then wilfully *conſpire* to *impoſe upon others?* Upon what Motives? That of Vain-Glory? No, certainly. The great *Leaders* of Parties may ſometimes expect to be tranſmitted down to *Poſterity*, with Marks of *Honour*, and to leave behind them a *bright* and *laſting Track* of *Glory*. But their numerous *Retinue* of *Followers* muſt expect to die *unnoticed*, as they lived unknown: Each of Them will be loſt in the Crowd, like ſo many *Cyphers*, undiſtinguiſhed, and of *no Conſideration* or *Moment*, any farther than they contribute to make the *principal Figure*, which was placed at the *Head* of them, more *conſiderable*. Now that Men ſhould give up the moſt *weighty* and *valuable* Conſiderations of *this* Life, nay *Life* itſelf, for *invaluable* Rewards in Heaven, and for an *exceeding Weight of Glory*; that they ſhould *ſuſpend* all Deſire of *Applauſe*, till they received the *ineſtimable* Applauſe of their *Creator* —— This is eaſily accounted for. But that Men ſhould give up their *All* here, for *Nothing* in *Reverſion*; that they ſhould reſign *Life* itſelf, without even expecting

Serm. II.

that *imaginary* Life, a great Name after Death, merely to atteſt and ſupport an *unprofitable Falſhood*—This is highly incredible, abſurd, and impoſſible.

I grant, that ſeveral may die Martyrs for an *Opinion* that is falſe; becauſe, *though* it be falſe, they may be *perſuaded* it is *true*. But Miracles, upon which Chriſtianity is founded, are Matters of *Fact*, of which the early Followers of the Apoſtles muſt have been Eye-Witneſſes. And no body ever died to aſſert an Untruth in Matters of *Fact*, as to which he could *not* be *deceived*, ſuppoſing the *Truth* of his *Senſes*: Though ſeveral have died, rather than renounce *Opinions*, the Falſity of which they had not Judgment enough to diſcover. Much leſs can it be imagined, that under the early Perſecutions of *Nero* and *Domitian*, many *Thouſands* of Chriſtians would go on in an *uninterrupted Track* of *falſifying* wilfully, at the Expence of their Lives; without *one* of them, even in the Article of *Death*, *deviating* into *Truth*.

The numerous Converts to Chriſtianity in the firſt Century, could *not* have *believed* it to be *true*, if it had been *falſe*. For they muſt have had an inward Conſciouſneſs,

neſs, whether they had received thoſe miraculous Gifts or not, for the Abuſe and Miſ-application of which St. *Paul* in his firſt Epiſtle to the *Corinthians* cenſures and reproves them. They muſt have had an *abſolute Certainty*, ſuppoſing no extraordinary Gifts were communicated to them, that he, from whom they received their Religion, and whoſe Epiſtles, as appears from St. *Peter* and others, were univerſally read as of divine Authority, was a *ſhameleſs Impoſtor*. And yet they could not have *profeſſed* the Belief of it, *knowing* it to be an *Impoſture*, at a Time, when Chriſtians were *of all Men moſt miſerable*, without any Proſpect of worldly Honour and Advantage, but with a certain Expectation of exquiſite Torments; except upon a Suppoſition that they loved Miſery and hated Happineſs, *as ſuch*.

Pliny, a Perſon of unſuſpected Veracity, in the Reign of *Trajan*, not ſeventy Years after the Reſurrection, in a Letter to the Emperor, informs him that, where he was Governor in *Bithynia*, a Place above twelve hundred Miles from *Jeruſalem* the neareſt Way; to arrive at which you muſt travel through ſeveral Nations, of *different* Lan-

SERM. II.

guages, *Syrians, Pamphylians, Carians, Lycians*, &c. Chriſtianity had ſo far prevailed, that *the Temples of the Gods were almoſt deſolated, their ſacred Rites a long Time intermitted*, and *there were very few that would buy any Sacrifices*; notwithſtanding great *Severities were inflicted upon Chriſtians of every Rank, Sex, and Age.*

Juſtin Martyr, who lived in the ſame Century, informs us, in his Dialogue with *Trypho* the *Jew*, that there was no Nation in the known World, where ſome did not pray to God in the Name of *Jeſus Chriſt*. What ſhall we ſay then? that the Apoſtles travelled from one End of the Earth to the other, without *underſtanding* the Languages of ſeveral Nations? Then it would have been impoſſible to have made any Converts, by ſpeaking to them in an *unknown* Tongue. Or ſhall we ſay, that Men bred up in *low* Employments had a vaſt *Variety* of Languages at Command? That would have been almoſt impoſſible, if they had made it the *whole* Buſineſs of their *Lives*. In ſhort, there is no other Way of accounting for it, but by *Inſpiration*: They could not *acquire* them; they muſt be the *Gift* of *God*. And when I conſider, that they enlightened as many Nations

Nations with a rational Devotion, and ſound Morality, as *Alexander* ravaged by the Force of Arms; that they did more in *one Century* to diſabuſe the World, and reſcue it from human Sacrifices, and to propagate beneficial Truth; than the *Philoſophers* had done for *many Ages:* I think, what was a mere Compliment, when applied to a certain great Hero, is but ſtrict Juſtice done to them, *viz.* that they were the Inſtruments *in tantis Rebus gerendis, quantas audere vix hominis; perficere nullius niſi Dei,* "in "bringing thoſe Things to bear, which "merely to attempt was more than hu-"man; but to perform was certainly God-"like and divine." That the Apoſtles, though *low*, ſhould overcome the *Great*; and though *ignorant*, ſhould teach the *Wiſe*; can only be aſcribed to him, who has choſen *the weak Things of this World to confound the Mighty.* SERM. II.

Beſides, ſuppoſing the Apoſtles had aſſerted, *without* any *Foundation*, that at the Death of our Saviour, when the Moon was at the Full, and conſequently there could be no *natural* Eclipſe, yet there was a *ſupernatural* one, and a Darkneſs of three Hours Continuance; that in the *Metropolis*

SERM. II.

of the Nation, the Partition of the Temple was rent from the Top to the Bottom; that the Graves were opened, and the Dead appeared in the Heart of the Nation; that fifty Days after, at the Solemnity of *Pentecoſt*, to celebrate which People reſorted from different Parts of the World, there was a Deſcent of fiery Tongues upon them, by virtue of which ſeveral, who, it could be proved, knew no Tongue but their native one, were empowered to converſe publickly with Men of different Nations, in their own Language: Suppoſe, I ſay, they ſhould have aſſerted theſe Things without any Foundation; could they have perſuaded one Man to have ſwallowed ſuch crude glaring Falſhoods in Matters of Fact, and make him believe he ſaw what he never did, a ſupernatural Eclipſe, and heard what he did not, the Miracle of Tongues? If they could, I ſhould not know which moſt to wonder at, their *Modeſty* in *aſſerting* ſuch notorious Untruths; or his *Underſtanding* in *believing* them. Thus their Story would have been an empty Bubble, which muſt have ſunk and vaniſhed, almoſt as ſoon as it roſe. That ſingle Fact of the miraculous Eclipſe, if falſe, muſt have proved

proved a *Mill-ſtone* about the Neck of it, and *ſunk* it *irretrievably*. It put it in the Power of Man, Woman, and Child, to diſprove their Relation: Every one would tell them, ſuch a Thing muſt be notorious and viſible to the whole World; which yet had eſcaped *their* Notice, and that of *every one* elſe they knew. They *could not* then have *impoſed* upon the *Age* in which they *lived*. SERM. II.

The only Thing that can be ſuppoſed is, that the Story might be put upon *after Ages*, at ſome *diſtant* Period of Time.

Place then the Date and Riſe of Chriſtianity at *what* Period of Time you *pleaſe*; could the Propagators of it perſuade any People to believe ſuch a Story of *public notorious* Facts, which they never *heard* of *before*, *without Foundation* or Evidence? No certainly, if they ſhould tell us, that, to perpetuate the Memory of theſe Actions, the Hiſtory of them had been written by *Eye-Witneſſes*, public *Sacraments* appointed, *weekly* and *annual Feſtivals* celebrated from *that* Time to *this*, and a *Church* founded, againſt which *the Gates of Hell never* could *prevail*. For then the Story would carry its own *Confutation* along with it, and they might have as well attempted to make

People

SERM. II.

People *believe* they *heard ignorant* Men *ſpeak* all Manner of *Languages*, or *ſaw* our Saviour *raiſe* the *Dead*; as that there was then in *Being* a Church, againſt which the Gates of Hell *never had prevailed*; in which theſe *Feſtivals had been always obſerved*, and theſe *Sacraments* always kept up. The Cry would have been; what is become of your Church, which was to be impregnable as a Rock, and laſting as the Sun? Is it become an *inviſible* Church indeed? *Out of your own Mouths will we condemn you: What need we farther Witneſſes?* Now would any Nation, diſcarding the Religion which they had been *bred* up in, admit a NEW one in its Stead, upon the Account of ſuch a groundleſs *ſelf-contradictory* Story? What, would they ſay, could ſuch glaring and notorious Facts, which muſt have alarmed the whole World, like the Sailing of a Ship, leave no Traces behind them of their Exiſtence in Hiſtory? In ſhort, ſuch an *unſupported* and *overgrown Falſhood* muſt have fallen to the Ground by its *own unwieldy Bulk*, without any one to overturn it.

To apply this to *Chriſtianity* in *general*. If the marvellous Facts were not true, the Books,

Books, which contain them, could never have been received; nor the Feſtivals and Obſervances, which commemorate them, have taken place in *that* Age, in which they were ſaid *to be done:* Becauſe it was *then* in *every* Body's Power to *diſprove* them. They could not, in any *after Ages*, have been impoſed upon Mankind: Becauſe, though Abſurdities may be grafted upon an *old* Religion, yet no Nation ever did, or will, voluntarily embrace a Religion entirely *new*, without any Evidence. And it is certain, they *were* not thus impoſed upon Mankind *long after*; becauſe it appears, by *uncontradicted written* Tradition, that theſe Actions, auguſt Ceremonies, and Feſtivals, did commence at the *Period aſſigned*, and have flowed down from their firſt *Fountain-Head* to the preſent Age, in *one uninterrupted Stream*. SERM. II.

To apply this to the Truth of the *Reſurrection* in *particular*. The *Apoſtolical* Age could not be deceived by a ſham Story of a Reſurrection, becauſe our Saviour's *Reſurrection* was as public and notorious, as his *Death* and *Crucifixion*, though not in *itſelf*, yet in its *immediate Conſequences*; I mean thoſe *Miracles wrought* before Thouſands,

SERM. II.

ſands, by Eye-Witneſſes, to *confirm* the *Truth* of it. Was it then ſet on foot in ſome *after Age?* No; becauſe both the *weekly* and *yearly* Memorials of it are of as old a Date as *Chriſtianity* itſelf, and, from the firſt Propagation of it, have been ſucceſſively handed down to us. That *Sunday* was the *weekly* Memorial of it, even in the *Apoſtolical* Age, is plain from St. *John*, who ſays, that *he was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day*, or the Day then ſet apart to commemorate the Lord's Reſurrection. And that there was an *annual* Memorial of it, inſtituted by the Apoſtles, and continued down to us, is plain from the early Diſputes about the *preciſe* Time, on which it was to be obſerved; though the Obſervation of *Eaſter* as an Apoſtolical Inſtitution, was never controverted. In ſhort, the Hiſtory of the Goſpel has *all* the Teſtimony, that *any* ancient Matter of Fact ever had; and it has, *beſides*, *ſeveral material Evidences*, which other ancient Matters of Fact have *not*. For are there any other ancient Matters of Fact, which were atteſted by Eye-Witneſſes, who expected *nothing* in this Life but *Miſeries* and *Hardſhips* for their Atteſtations; who were ready to lay

down their Lives for the Truth of what they ſaid; who could not be deceived themſelves, had no Intereſt to deceive others, nor could have deceived them if they would? Are there *ſtanding Monuments* and *ſenſible Obſervations*, appointed to keep up the Memory of *other* ancient Matters of Fact, commencing from the *Time* in which the *Actions* were *done*, and from thence, as from the *firſt* Link, deſcending to Poſterity in one *continual Chain*? Did any Religion beſides *conquer* by *ſuffering*, and by having its Thouſands, and ten Thouſands ſlain? Or did any beſides, though its Inſtruments were vaſtly unequal to the Taſk, bear down *all Oppoſition*, and triumph over the *Rage* of the *Jews*, the *Learning* of the *Philoſophers*, the *Power* of *Emperors*, and the *Prejudices* and *Paſſions* of *all Mankind*? SERM. II.

If Chriſtianity was an Impoſture; it was an Impoſture *ſui Generis*, a pure *Original*, *imitating no* Impoſture, that ever was heard of *before*, and which *no* Impoſture, I dare ſay, will ever *after* venture to *imitate*: An Impoſture, in which there could be no *Prieſtcraft*. For the Prieſts, by profeſſing and propagating it, expoſed themſelves to *ſuperior Tortures*: They ſtood in the *Front* of

Serm. II.

of the Battle, and were ſure to fall the *firſt*, and the *Biſhop* generally ended in the *Martyr*. An Impoſture in which there could be *no State-craft:* For *all the States* of the World for *three hundred* Years were *combined againſt* it.

So ſtrong, in ſhort, if we take the Arguments from Prophecy, the internal Excellency of Chriſtianity, and the Neceſſity of a Revelation into the Account, is the Evidence for Chriſtianity; that it is the laſt Thing I ſhould believe, that an *inquiſitive unprejudiced* Man, of a ſound Head, and an upright Heart, could be a *determined* Infidel. Nothing ought to be admitted in bar to ſuch pregnant Proofs, but ſome *abſolute Impoſſibility* in the Nature of the Thing: Mere *Difficulties* weigh Nothing: For at that rate we muſt diſbelieve *every* Thing in Nature; every Thing in Nature being attended with *great*, nay *inſuperable* Difficulties.

Could we ſuppoſe a Being in ſome other Part of the wide Creation, of the ſame Size of Underſtanding with ourſelves, but an intire Stranger to the natural Hiſtory of the World; ſhould any one inform him of the amazing Properties of the Loadſtone,

the *Phænomena* of Light and Colours, the *Circulation* of the Blood contrary to all the known Laws of Motion, the Revolutions of the Planets, the *Coheſion* of Matter, the *infinite* Diviſibility of *finite* Matter, nay, of the *leaſt* Grain of that finite Matter, the ſurprizing Effects of Chemiſtry; he would think the *Hiſtory* of *Nature* far more unaccountable, than any Deiſt can the Book of Grace, and the Hiſtory of the *Bible*.

Poor ſhort-ſighted Creatures! the *leaſt Grain* of Sand is able to baffle the *fineſt* Underſtanding: And yet we would pretend to ſound the *Depths* of the *divine* Nature and Counſels; never conſidering, what has been often obſerved, that, "if what was re-"vealed concerning *God*, were always adapted "to our *Comprehenſion*; how could it with "any Fitneſs repreſent *that* Nature, which "we allow to be *incomprehenſible?*" We need not to ranſack the *Scriptures* for Difficulties: *Every* Thing *about* us, and *within* us, *above* us and *beneath* us, convinces us, that we are very ignorant; and, if once we come to a Reſolution to quit what is *clear* (ſuch are the Proofs for Chriſtianity) upon the account of what is *obſcure*; we ſhall run

SERM. II.

run into univerſal Scepticiſm. We will not believe, that the Deity does or diſcovers *any thing* marvellous and unaccountable in an *unuſual* and *ſupernatural* Manner, though *every Thing*, that he does in the *common Road* of Providence, be marvellous and unaccountable to us.

Though Men may diſagree about Matters of pure *abſtract Reaſoning*; yet every reaſonable Man is determined by the *Evidences* for Matters of *Fact*, when they amount to a *moral Certainty*; unleſs it be in Caſes, where the *Paſſions* intereſt themſelves, and indiſpoſe the Mind for the Reception of Truth. Every *intelligent* Perſon, after Examination, muſt *judge alike* in *theſe* Matters; except his Judgment be *over-ruled*, and his Aſſent *obſtructed* by ſome *wrong* Affection, by ſome ſtrong *Bias*, and ſome inſuperable *Prejudice*, perhaps unſuſpected by himſelf: Otherwiſe a Man might ſeriouſly diſpute, whether *Julius Cæſar* made a Deſcent upon *England*, conquered *Pompey*, and was ſtabbed in the Senate-houſe; which *no* Man in *his Senſes* ever did, or ever will do. Either then it muſt be maintained, contrary to what I have already proved, that the Evidences of

Chriſtianity

Chriſtianity do not amount to a moral Certainty,——or, if they do, it will be difficult to aſſign a Reaſon, why clear, ſtrong, and indubitable Proofs, ſhould not have as much Force and Weight in the Affair of *Religion*, as they have in all *others*; unleſs we may ſuppoſe there is ſomething *amiſs within*, ſome latent *Diſingenuity* of Temper, which *here*, though not in other Caſes, ſhuts up all the Avenues, by which Light can find an Entrance.

Though we have not a *ſcientifical infallible* Certainty of the *Truth* of Chriſtianity; yet we have an *infallible* Certainty, that we *ought* to be *determined* by *ſuch* Evidences, as *Chriſtianity* is ſurrounded with: Becauſe either we muſt act upon *ſuch* Evidence in the *daily* Courſe of Life, or remain in a State of utter *Inaction*. He, that will not admit moral Certainty to be a ſufficient Principle of Action; if his Practice be conformable to his Perſuaſion, muſt neither eat nor drink, till he has a *mathematical* Demonſtration, that what he eats and drinks will prove *wholeſome*; he will be ſure of *nothing* in this World, but that he muſt, by acting up to ſuch a Notion, depart ſpeedily *out* of it. If we have a *moral* Certainty of the

Serm. III.

Truth of Chriſtianity; if every *unprejudiced* Mind is *determined* by moral Certainty, we may argue thus.—It is demonſtrably certain, that there is a Being of infinite Goodneſs, Truth and Veracity.——It is demonſtrably certain, that a Being of infinite *Goodneſs*, Truth and *Veracity*, will not miſlead his Creatures into *unavoidable* Errors, nor ſuffer an Impoſture to paſs upon the World, in his Name, in a Matter of the laſt Importance, with ſuch manifeſt Tokens of Credibility, and moral Certainty, as muſt, and do in every *other* Caſe, *determine* an *unprejudiced* Mind:—Therefore, it is demonſtrably certain, that Chriſtianity is no Impoſture. Thus the Chriſtian Faith, in the laſt Reſort, reſolves itſelf into, and terminates in, the divine Veracity: It is as ſure as that *God cannot lie*, that he who has laid his Creatures under an *Obligation* to *act* upon *moral* Evidence, would not have done ſo, if ſuch ſtrong Evidence could ever *inevitably* deceive them in an Affair of *infinite* Concernment.

SERMON

SERMON III.

Preached at the

Lady *MOYER*'s LECTURE.

On the Genuineneſs and Inſpiration of the Sacred Writers.

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1 THESS. II. 13.

When ye received the Word of God, which ye heard of us; ye received it not as the Word of Men, but (as it is in Truth) the Word of God.

SERM. III.

WHEN St. *Paul* preached the Goſpel of *Chriſt* to the *Theſſalonians*, they embraced it gladly, and believed it to be, what it really is, of divine Authority and Inſpiration.

That we may do ſo too, it will be neceſſary to prove,

SERM. III.

Iſt, The Genuineneſs of thoſe Books, which contain the Goſpel of *Jeſus Chriſt*. And,

II*dly*, Their divine Inſpiration.

Iſt, I am to prove the Genuineneſs of thoſe Books, which contain the Goſpel of *Jeſus Chriſt*.

Thoſe Authors are confeſſedly genuine, who have received the Sanction of their Contemporaries, or immediate Succeſſors, followed by an uninterrupted Series of Vouchers.

Thus St. *Paul* quotes the Goſpel of St. *Luke, whoſe Praiſe is in the Goſpel throughout all the Churches*, as of equal Authority with the Writings of *Moſes*. *For the Scripture ſaith, thou ſhalt not muzzle the Ox that treadeth out the Corn, and the Labourer is worthy of his Reward*, 1 Tim. v. 18. which laſt Paſſage occurs no where but in St. *Luke* x. ver. 7. as the former is to be met with *Deut.* xxv. ver. 4.

Thus St. *John*, as *Euſebius* * informs us, ſtamped his Authority, at the Inſtance

* Euſebii Hiſt. Eccl. Lib. 3. cap. 24.

of

of his Friends, upon the Goſpels of *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke*, and then added his own as a Supplement to them. SERM. III.

Much the ſame Account we have from the ancient Author of the Martyrdom of *Timothy*, with this additional Circumſtance, that before St. *John* reviewed them, they had already been tranſlated into ſeveral Languages *. Nor is it at all unlikely, that the ſame Zeal, which prompted St. *John* to expoſe one Fraud, as we ſhall prove by and by; would likewiſe determine him to authorize the genuine Records of Chriſtianity. This is what the World might expect from a Perſon ſo venerable for his Wiſdom and Authority, as well as for his great Age: And this is, what common Senſe would ſuggeſt to one; who lived after Forgeries had begun to creep abroad.

Though *Clemens Romanus*, *Barnabas*, *Hermas*, *Ignatius*, *Polycarp*, Writers who had been converſant with the Apoſtles, ſeldom aſcribe any of the Books of the New Teſtament to their reſpective Authors; yet they *virtually* own them all to be genuine, by ſhewing the moſt diſtinguiſhed Regard

* Photii Bibliotheca Cod. 254.

SERM. III. to them, by often quoting them and oftner alluding to them: An Honour they do no other Writings except thoſe of the Old Teſtament. They tranſcribe numerous Precepts from the Scriptures, of which their own Lives were indeed the moſt beautiful Tranſcript. That they have not expreſsly named the Authors, from whom they borrow, is eaſily accounted for: They wrote chiefly, if not entirely, for the Benefit of their Contemporaries, and it was needleſs to point out to thoſe, who lived ſo near the Fountain-Head, from what Source they drew that living Water, which they had ſo thoroughly imbibed, and ſo plentifully transfuſed into their own Compoſitions.

What a religious Veneration theſe early Writers paid to the Scriptures, the following Paſſage of *Ignatius* * will clearly ſhew. "Your Prayer to God, *ſays he*, ſhall make "me perfect, that I may attain to that "Portion, which his Mercy has aſſigned "me; having Recourſe to the Goſpel, as "to the Fleſh of *Jeſus Chriſt*; and to the "Apoſtles, as to the Preſbytery of the

* Ignatii Epiſt. ad Philadelph. Sect. 5. Cotelerii Patres Apoſtol. Tom. II. Vide Notas Johannis Clerici in locum.

"Church.

" Church. Let us alſo love the Pro- SERM. III.
" phets, becauſe even they preached the
" Goſpel, believed in *Chriſt*, and hoped
" for him *."

The Meaning of theſe remarkable Words is plainly this. That he as firmly believed the Goſpel, as if he had heard *Jeſus Chriſt* himſelf alive, and in the Fleſh, delivering to him the Precepts therein recorded; that

* Quod a Nemine, quod quidem ſciam, hoc uſque obſervatum fuit, monuit nos olim clariſſimus *Grabius*, *Ignatium* utriuſque hujus Canonis mentionem feciſſe, in Epiſtola ad *Philadelphicos*. Προσφυγὼν τῷ ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΩ ὡς σαρκὶ Ἰησοῦ, καὶ τοῖς ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΟΙΣ ὡς πρεσβυτερίῳ Ἐκκλησίας· καὶ τοὺς ΠΡΟΦΗΤΑΣ δὲ ἀγαπῶμεν, &c. Nempe per Εὐαγγέλιον, Codicem Evangelicum, per Ἀποστόλους, Codicem Epiſtolicum, per Προφήτας, Canonem Vet. Teſtamenti συνεκδυχικῶς intelligendum exiſtimat. Id quod nobis poſtea perſuaſiſſimum erat, etiam ex aliis Ignatii Locis. Nonnunquam enim Evangelii vocem ſtrictius ſumere videtur pro Codice Evangelico; (ut cum Evangelicum ἐξαιρέτως eſſe ait, ἐν ᾧ τὸ πάθος ἡμῖν δεδήλωται, καὶ ἡ ἀνάστασις τετελείωται. Epiſt. ad Smyrn. §. 7. & in Ep. ad *Philadelph.* Ἐξαίρετον ἔχει τὸ Εὐαγγέλιον, τὴν ἀνάστασιν, &c. §. 8.) tum vero alias laxiori ſignificatu Evangelium apud Eum pro Canone integro N. T. acceptum videmus; ubi ſimul memorat Legem Moſis, Prophetias, & Evangelium; (ὃς οὐκ ἔπεισαν αὐτοὺς προφῆται, οὐδ' ὁ νόμος Μωσέως ἀλλ' οὐδὲ μέχρι νῦν τὸ Εὐαγγέλιον. Ep. ad Smyrn. §. 5.) Quod ſi vero res; ta ſe habebat, Canon Epiſtolicus mediocri Temporis intervallo præceſſerit neceſſe eſt Epiſtolas Ignatianas; ideoque & prodierit ſub annum forte æræ Vulgaris CX. ſive etiam aliquanto ante. *Millii Prolegom.* pag. 24.

SERM. III. he betook himſelf to the Writings of the Apoſtles, with no leſs Aſſurance, than if that venerable Preſbytery were then acting, immediately under the great Biſhop and Shepherd of their Souls, *Jeſus Chriſt*; that after theſe, the next Regard was to be paid to the Writings of the Prophets, becauſe they had foretold our Saviour's Advent, his Death and Paſſion.

From hence we may gather, that the Canon of the New Teſtament was then ſettled and put upon a Foot of Equality with the Old. When he ſays, *Let us love the Prophets*, who could be known to him no otherwiſe than by their Writings, he undoubtedly means their Compoſitions, and the Books of the Old Teſtament: And when he ſays, *he has Recourſe to the Goſpel, and the Apoſtles*, he no leſs plainly means the main Body of the New Teſtament, as divided into the four Goſpels, and the Epiſtles of the Apoſtles.

In his Epiſtle to the Inhabitants of *Smyrna*, Section the 7th, he writes thus: "It "becomes us to attend to the Prophets, "but eſpecially the Goſpel, in which the "Paſſion has been ſhewn to us, and the "Reſurrection perfected."

And

And again, Section 5th, in the ſame Epiſtle, " whom neither the Prophecies, " nor the Law of *Moſes*, nor even the " Goſpel, to this very Day could per- " ſuade."

From *Ignatius*, who, as St. *Chryſoſtom* ſays, converſed familiarly with the Apoſtles, and was intimately acquainted with their Doctrine; let us paſs on to *Polycarp*, who was not only inſtructed by the Apoſtles, but by them conſtituted Biſhop of the Church of *Smyrna* *.

From him we learn, that in that early Age, the Books of the New Teſtament were generally ſtudied, and dignified with the Name of Holy Writings. " For, I " truſt, *ſays he*, that ye are well verſed in " the Holy Scriptures, and that Nothing " (of this kind) has eſcaped you.—And " in theſe it is ſaid, *Be ye angry and ſin* " *not*. And *let not the Sun go down upon* " *your Wrath* †."

And in another very ſhort Paragraph ‡, where he has quoted the Sacred Writings no leſs than four Times, he ſtyles thoſe

* *Irenæus*, Lib. 3. cap. 3.

† Polycarpi Ep. ad Philippenſes. Sect. 12.

‡ Ibidem. Sect. 7th.

Writings,

SERM. III. Writings, which he quotes, "the Oracles "of the Lord." The Church of *Smyrna*, over which he preſided, in their Account of his Martyrdom, written immediately after his Death, appeals to the Scriptures, as of deciſive Authority. "We do not com-"mend, *ſay they*, thoſe who offer them-"ſelves [to Martyrdom] ſince the Goſpel "teaches no ſuch Thing *."

If, as it plainly appears from *Ignatius* and *Polycarp*, the Writings of the New Teſtament were put upon a Level with thoſe of the Old; then it will follow, that they were read at that Time in private Families and public Congregations; ſince the *Jewiſh* Scriptures confeſſedly had that diſtinguiſhing Mark of Reſpect paid to them: And it is plain, they received the ſame Scriptures which we do: Since their Quotations every where agree in *Senſe* and *Subſtance* with the Books which we now receive, though they do not confine themſelves always *preciſely* to the ſame *Words*: For it was the Cuſtom of that Age to quote *memoriter*.

That St. *Paul*'s Epiſtles were thus publickly read, we have earlier Evidence. He

* Cotelerii Patres Apoſtol. pag. 196.

himſelf orders one of them (if not two) to be read in the Churches of the *Laodiceans* and *Coloſſians* *; and we may fairly gather from St. *Peter*'s Words †, that the reſt of his Epiſtles had the ſame juſt Honour done them. SERM. III.

Papias, who was Contemporary with theſe Writers, and converſant with the immediate Diſciples of the Apoſtles, expreſsly aſcribes ‡ the Goſpels of St. *Matthew* and *Mark* to their reſpective Authors, and eſtabliſhes the Genuineneſs of the firſt Epiſtle of *Peter*, and the firſt of *John*.

The Sum of the Evidence from the Apoſtolical Writers is this: That the Writings of the New Teſtament were then gathered into one Volume, publickly read in Churches, and univerſally received; ſince they are quoted by *Clemens* at *Rome*, by *Barnabas* at *Cyprus*, by *Ignatius* in *Syria*, by *Polycarp* at *Smyrna*, and by *Papias* at *Hierapolis* in *Phrygia*.

When *Juſtin Martyr*, in the Year 140, in his ſecond Apology mentions, (and men-

* Coloſſians iv. 16.

† 2 Pet. iii. 16.

‡ Euſebii Eccleſ. Hiſt. Lib. 3. cap. 39.

tions

SERM. III.

tions it, not as ſomething new,) that *every Sunday the Prophetical Writings, and the Memoirs of the Apoſtles were read publickly in the Chriſtian Congregations*; can it be doubted but he meant thoſe very Writings of the Apoſtles, whom he ſo frequently cites in his own? Add to this, that the *Syriac* Verſion, which ſeveral learned Men have, I think, proved to be made in or near the Times of the Apoſtles, but is undoubtedly of great Antiquity, agrees exactly (ſome Differences not material excepted,) with our preſent Canon. If the preſent Scriptures then were Forgeries; either they were publiſhed in the *Apoſtolical* Age, or not. If they were, then the Apoſtles, who made it their Buſineſs to propagate ſincere and unmixed Truth, would not ſee their pious Labours defeated, but would take care to unmaſk the Impoſture. Of this we have a pregnant Inſtance in St. *John*. No ſooner were the Acts of *Paul* and *Thecla* forged, than he took care to detect, convict, and degrade the Author of them, who was a Preſbyter, and gave Notice of it to the *Aſiatic* Churches; as we learn from *Tertullian* *.

* De Baptiſmo, cap. 17.

But

But if they were publiſhed *after* the Apoſtolical Age; then it will be impoſſible to account how they came to be received *every* where, in ſo ſhort a Time with an *univerſal* Agreement, in Countries ſome hundreds of Miles diſtant from one another, without any *Oppoſition*, by Perſons who were rigidly *tenacious* of whatever was *Apoſtolical*, as appears by the early Controverſy about *Eaſter*, by Perſons who *ſacrificed* their Lives for the Truths contained in thoſe Books. *Tertullian* appealing to the Apoſtolical Churches, giveth us to underſtand, that in his Time *, *ipſæ authenticæ Literæ eorum recitantur*. "the very authentic "Letters of the Apoſtles were read there;" where, by *authentic*, he muſt mean *Autographa*, the Apoſtles *Hand* Writing; otherwiſe why ſhould he *ſingle* out and ſpecify the Churches planted by the *Apoſtles*? The genuine Copies of their Writings in *Greek*, if that was all he meant, were certainly read in *other* Churches, *beſides* thoſe which were planted by the *Apoſtles*.

Great Noiſe I know has been made about the many *ſpurious* Pieces: But the Queſtion, in ſhort, is this, 1*ſt*, Whether

* *Tertull.* de Præſcript. cap. 36.

thoſe

SERM. III.

thoſe ſpurious Pieces were generally received in the *early* Ages? If they can prove this, they will ſay ſomething to the Purpoſe to invalidate the preſent Canon: If they cannot, then thoſe Forgeries cannot be put upon an equal Foot with the preſent Scripture. For the Argument for the preſent Scripture is this, that it is incredible, ſuch a Number of good and learned Men, without any intereſted Views, in the moſt diſtant Countries, ſhould combine together in a Cheat, or be impoſed upon by one. It is much eaſier to ſuppoſe a falſe Statute-Book put upon a whole Nation, than a ſpurious Bible put upon the whole Chriſtian World, whereſoever diſperſed, without a Diſcovery.

2*dly*, Can any one Martyr be produced for the ſuppoſititious Pieces? No, on the contrary, thoſe who diſagreed with the Apoſtolical Churches, and introduced wild and abſurd Notions, held it unneceſſary to ſuffer Martyrdom. *Juſtin Martyr* (Apol. 2*d*.) makes it the diſtinguiſhing Character of all the Hereticks in his Age, that they were ſo far from ſuffering, that they never were perſecuted for their Religion. *Tertullian (Scorpiacon)* calls them *Martyriorum Refragatores*,

fragatores, Decliners of Martyrdom. They were too wiſe to part with their Lives for ſuch chimerical and romantic Inventions. Whereas ſeveral thouſands expired leiſurely in ſtudied Torments, atteſting the Truth of the Goſpels, when they might be eaſily ſatisfied of their Genuineneſs by the concurring Teſtimony of the Chriſtian World, as well as by Tradition, from the Churches planted by the Apoſtles. SERM. III.

3*dly*, Whoever will give himſelf the Trouble to read over the Fragments of theſe Forgeries, preſerved by the Ancients, and collected by the Moderns, may eaſily ſee they carry their own Confutation along with them; they carry evident Marks of Spuriouſneſs. And when he compares them with the genuine Productions of the inſpired Writers, he will find that Paſſage of *Cicero* applicable, *Opinionum commenta delet Dies, Naturæ judicia confirmat*. The former were like miſhapen Monſters, which are very ſhort-lived; the latter, like the genuine Productions of Nature, that have ſtrong *Stamina*, gradually increaſed in Strength. They weathered out the Storm, and outlived the Rage of ten Perſecutions. It need not, I think, ſtagger the Faith of any,

any, that the *Gnoſticks*, who patronized abominable Impurities; that the *Manichæans* and *Encratites*, who held two independent Principles, and *Baſilides* with his Followers, who maintained the Lawfulneſs of unnatural Luſt, ſhould reject the Scriptures, and forge new ones. They were againſt the Goſpels for this very good Reaſon, becauſe the Goſpels were againſt them. They aſſigned no Reaſons why they rejected ſome Parts of Scriptures, and admitted others; but were acted by Caprice and arbitrary Humour; unleſs this may paſs for a Reaſon, that they pretended to be wiſer than the Apoſtles, and able to correct them. See *Irenæus*, Lib. 3.

Diſmiſſing therefore theſe Hereticks, it will be material to obſerve, that the Scriptures viſibly bear that Stamp of Antiquity, which they pretend to; that they are conformable to the Genius of that Age and Nation, in which they were ſaid to be penned; that there are in them no Anachroniſms, no Miſtakes about the Tenets, religious Rites, and Variety of Sects among the *Jews*, at that particular Juncture; no Blunders about thoſe ſeveral eminent Perſonages, which then acted in a public Ca-

pacity: Their Speech and Idiom never bewraying them, to be of a different Country, but every where adapted to that Dialect and Manner of Expreſſion, which was peculiar to the *Jews*. If the Scriptures were not of that Antiquity, which they lay Claim to; then it would have been morally impoſſible, for a Writer of a later Date, to hit *critically* the Air of *Antiquity*, to hit the *diſtinguiſhing* Marks, and *appropriate Characteriſticks* of the Time and Nation, in which they were pretended to be compoſed, and to be conſiſtent, and all of a Piece, from firſt to laſt, throughout ſeveral Performances of a conſiderable Length, without being ever off his Guard, without once dropping the Maſk, without once giving way to Phraſes, that were in Vogue, when he himſelf lived, Phraſes, that would be ever uppermoſt in his Mind, and preſſing for a Vent; without any Alluſions to Cuſtoms, that were not then in being; without any Miſtakes in Chronology, Geograpraphy, and the Hiſtory of thoſe Times. SERM. III.

It is thus, that all Forgeries have been laid open, and none of them have been able to ſtand the Teſt of Criticiſm: Something there was in their Stile or Matter;

SERM. III. Something in the *Nature* and *Texture* of the Books, that *betrayed* them. And it is eaſier for a Perſon of Learning, Sagacity, and Judgment, to diſcover the Age of an *Author*, than it is for a *Connoiſſeur* to diſcover that of a *Medal*, *Coin*, *Picture*, or *Statue*. It remains then, that the Scriptures are as ancient, as they pretend to be.

And if ſo, then they muſt be true; otherwiſe they could not have been received: For as they contain a punctual circumſtantial Relation of public Facts, with the *Time when*, *the Places where*, and the *Perſons* before *whom* they were performed, the Authors of them could not have put upon the World ſuch a continued Series of marvellous unparalleled Actions, ſaid to be done in the Eye of the World, when they muſt be freſh in their Memories, without being detected.

It is certain, that St. *Paul*'s Epiſtles (all except that to the *Hebrews*) ever were looked upon as genuine, by *uncontroverted* written Tradition, from the Time in which they were publiſhed in a continued Train of Vouchers, down to the preſent Age; the very *judaizing* Chriſtians, who would not be determined by his Authority, as an Ene-

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my to thoſe *Jewiſh* Ceremonies, which they would have incorporated with Chriſtianity, never denying him to be the real Author. St. *Peter*, 2d Epiſtle, iii. 16. firſt of all gives a full Sanction to all his Epiſtles, giving us to underſtand, that they were read publickly, as other Scriptures, and that many made a bad Uſe of them. *Clemens Romanus* his Fellow-Labourer, whoſe *Name is in the Book of Life*, in his firſt Epiſtle to the *Corinthians*, deſires them to read again St. *Paul*'s firſt Epiſtle to them, where he bids them ſhun Diviſions, while *one ſaid, I am of Paul, another I am of Apollos, another of Cephas*. *Ignatius*, in his firſt Epiſtle to the *Epheſians*, makes mention of St. *Paul*'s to them. *Polycarp*, writing to the *Philippians*, very warmly recommends St. *Paul*'s Epiſtle to them, with high Commendations, both of the Author and his Compoſition. And theſe three laſt-mentioned Writers in the Apoſtolical Age, beautify their own Performances with Quotations from his. If then St. *Paul*'s Epiſtles, for which we have uncontradicted deciſive Evidence, be genuine, Chriſtianity will ſtand its Ground: For they contain all the eſſential and vital Articles, all the main *Stamina* of the Chriſtian Doctrine. Beſides,

SERM. III.

SERM. III.

Beſides, he muſt have little Knowledge of *Painting*, that cannot diſcover St. *Paul*'s Letters to be *Originals* * : His very *Soul* ſpeaks in all his Writings : There is that undiſſembled Zeal for the Glory of God, and the Salvation of Mankind ; that Courage, that beautiful Diſregard to his own Intereſt, when it interfered with higher Views ; that Boldneſs of Expreſſion, that Life and Spirit, which is hard to be counterfeited. The ſame Force and Energy, which animated all his *Actions*, and empowered him to ſpread the Goſpel from Eaſt to Weſt, ennobles all his *Compoſitions* ; and it would be almoſt as impoſſible for an Impoſtor to *write*, as St. *Paul* did ; as it would be to *act*, as he did. It is very difficult to *perſonate a warm affectionate, intereſting* Writer. We may trace the ſame Features, and an exact Reſemblance in his *Speeches* in the *Acts* of the *Apoſtles*, and in his *Epiſtles*, which proves them both to be the Offspring of the ſame Parent. In both there is the ſame Greatneſs of Spirit, the ſame glowing Language, and elevated Thoughts, warm from the Heart. In both he either ſpeaks or writes with too animated

* *Temple*'s Eſſays, 2d Vol. Page 59.

a *Zeal*

a *Zeal* to be a cold *Deceiver*, with too much *Senſe*, Solidity, and Conſiſtency to be an *Enthuſiaſt*. SERM. III.

Let us review the Ground, which we have already gained. Thoſe Authors, according to the celebrated Maxim of *Hueti-us*, are genuine, that are quoted as ſuch by Writers, in or next to the Times they were ſaid to write, and ſo downwards, by ſucceeding Ages, in an uninterrupted Series. If this Axiom be not granted, all Hiſtorical Evidence muſt fall to the Ground: We may reject all ancient Hiſtorians; for it is the only Evidence we have of their being authentic. But, beſides this Evidence, which the Scriptures have in common with ancient Writers, they have an *additional* Enforcement, which other Writers have not, *viz.* the Impoſſibility that a Forgery, in a Matter of ſuch vaſt Conſequence, ſhould gain Footing throughout the Chriſtian World, and be received with the profoundeſt Veneration, in all their religious Aſſemblies, when living near the Fountain-head, they could not want Opportunity and Power to detect it, if it had been ſuch; and being expoſed continually to Martyrdom, they could have no Intereſt to adhere to it,

SERM. III.

in Contradiction to their own Sentiments. The leſs Intereſt they had to receive the Books, as genuine, the more Evidence they would require.

The Scriptures have *travelled* to us with the *Paſſport* of all *former* Ages, from their *firſt ſetting out* into the World, down to the preſent Times. While the Apoſtles, and their immediate Succeſſors, were living, it was *too early* to obtrude any forged Books upon the World with Succeſs; becauſe they both could, and undoubtedly would, have detected them. But after the Apoſtles, and their immediate Succeſſors, were dead, it was *too late* to impoſe upon the World any ſpurious Compoſitions; becauſe then the genuine Works were every where received; which could not in a *Trice* be *ſpirited* away, and others, as it were by Inchantment, ſubſtituted in their Room, without any Notice taken.

In ſhort, if Books which have all the unexceptionable Credentials, internal and external, of being genuine, that any ancient Record can have, be, after all, mere Forgeries; then we have nothing to do, but to commit to the Flames all paſt Records, and to believe Nothing but what we ſee.

But

But if this be impoſſible; then the Scriptures, the Book of Grace; and the World, the Book of Nature, both compoſed by the ſame Hand, both having impreſſed upon them the moſt lively Traces of divine Goodneſs and Benevolence, will *only periſh together:* And the Scriptures, the Groundwork and *Pillar of our Faith*, will laſt, till *Faith* be *loſt* in *Intuition*.

Having proved the Genuineneſs of the Books of the New Teſtament; I now proceed,

II*dly*, To prove the Authors were divinely inſpired.

By Inſpiration I mean the Action of God upon Men's Minds, conveying Truths to them, and impreſſing Sentiments upon them, in an extraordinary Manner.

The Poſſibility of this admits of no Diſpute. The Power of God, which enables us to communicate our Thoughts to one another, can alſo undoubtedly communicate his Thoughts to us; and make us as intimately conſcious, that thoſe Impreſſions are made by *him ſolely*, as that *any* Impreſſions are made upon us at all. It will be more

SERM. III.

material to ſtate the Caſe, becauſe there has been ſome Confuſion on this Head.

We muſt diſtinguiſh between an Aſſiſtance of *Direction*, from the Holy Spirit; and an Aſſiſtance of *immediate Suggeſtion*. In relating Matters of Fact, of which the Apoſtles were Eye-Witneſſes, or in pointing out Things, whereof they had a previous and competent Knowledge; there the Aſſiſtance of *Direction* from the Holy Spirit was only wanting, to guard them from any Error, at leaſt any material Error; that they ſhould not inſert any Falſhood, or leave out any momentous Truth. But, in Caſes, which were plainly above their Reach, ſuch as clearly explaining, and ſtrongly enforcing, a complete unerring Syſtem of religious and moral Truths, as diſcovering thoſe Sanctions, which *Eye had not ſeen, nor Ear heard, nor had it entered into the Heart of Man to conceive*; in revealing Myſteries, and declaring Things to come; an immediate *Suggeſtion* of the Holy Spirit was requiſite to imprint theſe Truths upon their Minds, and to enable them to convey them to us: Their natural Abilities being unequal to the Taſk.

We

We do not maintain, that every Word or Sentence in the Holy Scriptures, was *dictated* immediately by God: St. *Paul* might ſalute the Brethren, and write for what he wanted from *Troas* without any *ſupernatural* Aſſiſtance: For what Men *know* without any immediate Impulſe from God; that they may certainly *write*, without any immediate Impulſe from him. Nay, we may make a larger Conceſſion, and allow, without any great Diſadvantage to the Chriſtian Cauſe, that there may be in Scripture ſome few Inaccuracies, as to the Point of Language, and other unconcerning Niceties. For this will only prove, that, where there was *no extraordinary Occaſion* to interpoſe, God *did not* think fit to interpoſe in an *extraordinary* Manner. All, that we contend for, is this; that in the doctrinal and prophetical Parts of Scripture, and whatever elſe was neceſſary to be revealed; the Apoſtles wrote from the *immediate Suggeſtion* of the Holy Spirit: And as to all other Things, that ſacred Perſon *ſo far ſuperintended* and directed them, as to *ſecure* them from *Error*: It not being conſiſtent with the Honour of God to ſuffer thoſe, who by Miracles proved a Miſ-

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SERM. III.

ſion from him, to ſtamp a Credit upon Falſhood, by virtue of that Miſſion.

Having thus far cleared the Way, I ſhall proceed to prove the Matter of Fact, that the Apoſtles were actually inſpired.

Now it is certain, that the Apoſtles were inſpired, in propagating and *preaching* the Goſpel: Men of their Education could never acquire ſuch a prodigious Variety of Languages, as enabled them to ſpeak to the ſeveral Nations, where they travelled, in their own native Tongues, and to ſpread the Goſpel from Eaſt to Weſt, to the uttermoſt Parts of the known World. This Command of ſeveral Tongues, by which they were empowered to make Converts in the remoteſt Countries, cannot be accounted for in a *natural* Way; it muſt be the Effect of *Inſpiration*.

Now if God inſpired them in the Affair of *Preaching*; it would follow much more ſtrongly, that he inſpired them in committing, what they preached, to *Writing*: Since their *Preaching* was confined within a *narrower* Circle, and operated but upon Few in *Compariſon*. But their Writings took in a *wider* Sphere, were of a more *diffuſive Influence*, and were intended to reach

reach to all *Ages*, as well as extend to all Nations. SERM. III.

I have already proved, in a former Diſcourſe, that the Miracles recorded in Scripture were wrought by God; and that we have ſufficient Evidence, that ſuch Miracles were actually wrought.——If then ſuch Miracles were performed; ſuch an uninterrupted Profuſion of unrivalled wondrous Works was given by him, who doth nothing in vain, for ſome *important End*.—— No other important End can be aſſigned, but the reſcuing Mankind from Error, and diſcovering to them neceſſary Truth.—— Where God deſigns the End, he muſt deſign the Means requiſite to that End.——— The Means requiſite to that End are to preſerve his Inſtruments, in revealing his Will, from every material Miſtake.—— Conſequently, we may implicitly acquieſce in the Belief of the Scriptures. For, if there are no material Miſtakes, it can do us no Harm to believe, what will no way affect us.——But if there are material Errors, which may affect our Happineſs; then God's Deſign, in which he embarked, proved abortive; and that mighty *Apparatus*, that Waſte of Miracles, anſwered no rational

rational End at all, if it did not compaſs this End, *viz.* to guide Mankind to beneficial Truth, and to reſcue them from Falſhood.

Divine Credentials (ſuch are Miracles) prove a divine Miſſion.——He who has a divine Miſſion, thus atteſted, ſpeaks with Authority from God.———He who ſpeaks with Authority from God, muſt ſpeak ſeveral *important* Truths, and can ſpeak Nothing, *but* the Truth. It is certain, that the Apoſtles pretended to divine Inſpiration; and it is as certain, that, if they had been uninſpired, that Being, who *cannot lie*, would never have declared himſelf in Favour of Perſons guilty of a ſolemn and deliberate Lie, and *borne them Witneſs with Signs and Wonders*. When therefore we are aſked, whether the Apoſtles, who were *but* Men, could be infallible? We anſwer, that in the *common* Scenes, and *ordinary* Occurrences of Life, they were fallible, like other Men; but when they acted in their *extraordinary* Capacity, as *Ambaſſadors of God*, as Prophets and Apoſtles; there they muſt be conſidered as infallible. Had they groſsly miſtaken, or wilfully miſrepreſented the divine Will; God would have

have *revoked* the Commiſſion, which they had *abuſed*, for the ſame *Reaſon* that he *authorized* them at firſt; and would have inveſted ſome other Perſons with ſuperior Powers to confront them, and to diſabuſe the World from any Error, that might be impoſed upon it in his ſacred Name. How weak, when conſidered in this Light, is the Objection againſt Inſpiration, from the Diſagreement of St. *Peter* and St. *Paul*, when the latter at *Antioch* withſtood the former to the Face? For, ſuppoſing that St. *Peter* had differed from St. *Paul*, in a Point of *Doctrine* and Principle, and not, as he only did, in a Point of *Behaviour*; yet what would be the mighty formidable Conſequence, that could be drawn from thence? Nothing would follow but this, *viz.* that when any Perſon ſent by God ſhould attempt to deceive others; the Deity would raiſe up ſome other Man, who ſhould be effectually enabled to withſtand him, to undeceive Mankind, and to prevent that Miſchief, which his Falling off from the Truth might otherwiſe occaſion. SERM. III.

That at a Time, when *the Word of God was made of none Effect by the Traditions* of the

the *Phariſees*, when the *Jews* were devoted to external Obſervances, to the Neglect of inward Piety; when they were prepoſſeſſed with an Opinion, that they were to continue God's peculiar People without the Admiſſion of the Gentiles; ſome of the loweſt Rank and Education ſhould enlarge their Minds from national Prejudices, and inveterate Errors, and ſhould publiſh the *only* Religion, which is fit to be the Religion of *all Mankind*, free from the Superſtitions of the *Pagan* World, and the numerous Ceremonies of the *Jewiſh*; is a Matter of Fact, which wants to be accounted for, and cannot be accounted for, but by Inſpiration. Where ſhall we find among the Philoſophers ſuch a compleat Body of moral and religious Duties founded upon ſuch Promiſes and Threatnings, as the Goſpel contains?

"That if you put Virtue into one Scale, "and the whole World into the other, the "former will infinitely outweigh the lat-"ter *;" is a very exalted Notion, and would have been a juſt one, if the Author had taken into the Account a future State, which only can give ſuch a Weight to Vir-

* Audebo virtutis amplitudinem quaſi in altera libræ lance ponere. Terram, mihi crede, ea lanx et maria deprimet. *Cicero de Finibus.* Page 435. *Ed. Davis.*

tue. How much more rationally noble and beautiful is this parallel Thought of our bleſſed Saviour! *What is a Man profited, if he ſhall gain the whole World, and loſe his own Soul? Or what ſhall a Man give in Exchange for his Soul?* Matt. xvi. 26. SERM. III.

Beſides theſe Arguments for Inſpiration, from Miracles in general, from the Gift of Tongues in particular, and from the internal Excellency of the Scriptures; another ariſes from the Prophecies; ſuch as thoſe of *Daniel*, concerning *Alexander*'s Conqueſt over the *Perſians*, the amazing Rapidity with which he ſubdued *Perſia*, *Aſia*, and *India*, intimated in this Expreſſion, *he toucheth not the Ground*; that is, he rather flew than went, he reduced them in a leſs Compaſs of Time, than a Traveller could have taken an accurate Survey of them. He goes on, in his eighth Chapter, to foretel that, after *Alexander*'s Death, his Kingdom ſhould be divided into four Parts, which accordingly came to paſs; that out of one of them ſhould ariſe a King, *(Antiochus Epiphanes)* who ſhould haraſs and perſecute the *Jews*, and prophane the Temple. Theſe Predictions are ſo clear and punctual, that *Porphyry* could not evade the

SERM. III.

the Force of them, but by ſuppoſing, without any Grounds, that the Book was forged after the Events. To diſprove this unſupported Suppoſition, it is enough to obſerve, that the whole *Jewiſh Nation* could not be conſenting to, or impoſed upon, by a Fraud of this Nature, ſo as to receive a Forgery into the Sacred Canon, at a Time when it was divided into ſeveral religious Sects and Parties, which kept a watchful Eye over one another; at a Time, when the Zeal of the *Jews* for their ſacred Writings was ſo great, that they refuſed to deliver them up to *Antiochus Epiphanes*, and were reſolved to ſacrifice their Lives, rather than part with them.

But ſuppoſing theſe Prophecies forged after the Events; what ſhall we ſay as to thoſe, which we know to be verified at this Day? *viz. Egypt ſhall be the* BASEST *of Kingdoms, neither ſhall it exalt itſelf* ANY MORE *above the Nations. For I will diminiſh them, that they ſhall* NO MORE *rule* over the Nations, *Ezek.* xxix. 14, 15. And again, *Babylon ſhall be no more inhabited for* EVER, *neither ſhall it be dwelt in from Generation to Generation*, Jer. l. 39. And again, *Ye* (the *Jews*) *ſhall be ſcattered among all Nations, from one End of the*

Earth to the other, and ſhall become an Aſtoniſhment, a Proverb, and a By-word among all Nations. SERM. III.

Our Saviour foretels, that *not one Stone* of the *Jewiſh* Temple *ſhould be left upon another:* And, when *Julian* the Emperor endeavoured to rebuild it, "dreadful Balls "of Fire breaking from the Foundation, made the Place inacceſſible. The "Workmen, as oft as they repeated their "Efforts, were at ſeveral Times deſtroyed; "and, the Element repulſing them ſo often, as if it were deſignedly, the Enterprize was baffled." Theſe laſt are the Words of *Ammianus Marcellinus*, an Heathen Hiſtorian, who was an Officer under *Julian*. Thus this Emperor, by endeavouring to invalidate our Saviour's Prediction, concerning the Deſtruction of the *Jewiſh* Church and State, *till the Fullneſs of the Gentiles ſhould come in*, only confirmed it the more.

Theſe Prophecies, and many others, to which the Events exactly correſponded, give an inconteſtable Proof, that the Scriptures are the Word of God; ſince none but God can diſcover future Events, which depend upon the Determination of free Agents.

A *partial* Inſpiration, is to all Intents and Purpoſes the ſame as *no* Inſpiration *at all*. For Mankind would be as much *embarraſſed*, to know *what* was *inſpired*, and what was *not*; as they could be to *collect* a Religion for *themſelves*: The Conſequence of which would be, that we are left, juſt where we were before; and that God put himſelf to a great Expence of Miracles to effect nothing at all: A Conſequence highly derogatory and injurious to his Honour. It is much more conſiſtent with God's Honour to ſuppoſe, that, when he thought fit to interpoſe himſelf, he took care to diſplay Truth in its genuine and native Simplicity, without any baſer Alloys; that he made his Revelation all of a Piece, and, like himſelf, *pure unmixed Light*, in which *there is no Darkneſs*, no Error, no Falſehood; than to fanſy he did his Work by *halves*, let others adulterate his Suggeſtions with their own impure Mixtures, and, in a motley Piece, blend, what ought always to be kept diſtinct, the Doctrines of God, and the Inventions of Men. Had any *one Point* of Doctrine been falſe or erroneous, God would not have authoriſed their Doctrines *in the groſs* by Miracles. For God can

can no more authoriſe Falſehood in *part*, than he can what is *wholly* and entirely ſo. He *wrought with them, and confirmed the Word with Signs following*, *Mark* xvi. 20. He did not impreſs the Sanction of his Authority upon *this* or *that* Propoſition excluſively of others, but *confirmed* the *Whole* of what they delivered without diſtinction; and therefore we muſt *receive* the *Whole* without diſtinction, and not think ourſelves at liberty to ſingle out ſome Points as obligatory, and reject others. SERM. III.

It is no Argument againſt univerſal Inſpiration; that St. *Paul* declares, *to the reſt ſpeak I, not the Lord.* For the Meaning is not, that he was deſtitute of Inſpiration; but that the Lord (our Saviour) had not, during his Life, ſpoken and determined concerning the Point in Debate, concerning unequal Marriages, of a Believer, for Inſtance, with an Infidel. That this is the Senſe appears from what goes before: *To the Married ſpeak not I, but the Lord.* That is, though our Saviour had left the Point of unequal Marriages undetermined, yet he had decided the Caſe of Divorces. St. *Paul* does not declare he was uninſpired; but that our Lord had not pronounced a de-

SERM. III.

finitive Sentence on certain Points. As little can be gathered from theſe Words, *I think, I have the Spirit of the Lord:* For they are an Irony, in anſwer to thoſe, who called in queſtion the Truth of his Miſſion, as much as to ſay, "Whatever you may "imagine, who oppoſe my Miſſion; yet "I, who ſhould know beſt, with humble "Deference to your Judgment, ſuppoſe, "I have the Spirit of the Lord."

Whatever Diſputes may be raiſed about the *Degree* of Inſpiration; it is an obvious Concluſion of Reaſon; that when God deſigned to notify his Will to Mankind, he would take care that the Perſons commiſſioned by him, for that Purpoſe, ſhould publiſh what was his *Will*; and Nothing *contradictory* or *diſagreeable* thereto. Take this Key in your Hand, and you unlock all the Difficulties, that have been raiſed formerly, and revived of late, againſt Inſpiration. For the Bible muſt be allowed to contain an infallible Rule of Faith and Practice; unleſs it can be proved, which has not yet been done, that the Authors of it have omitted ſome Truth eſſentially neceſſary to Salvation, or advanced ſomething flagrantly abſurd, and manifeſtly repugnant to the

Will

Will of God. No other Objections are of any Force or Significancy: Because no other Objections can set aside the positive Evidence for such an Assistance of the Spirit as was sufficient to preserve them from Error and guide them to all necessary Truths. SERM. III.

Now, as to the Charge of Inconsistencies, Absurdities, and Contradictions; whatever has been urged on this Head, has been satisfactorily answered by several able Writers. But, supposing all Objections of this kind could not be solved; it is much more reasonable to suppose, that they *may* admit of a *rational Solution*, though we at this Distance of Time, who want an adequate Knowledge of the Customs, Peculiarities, and Genius of the Eastern Nations, cannot hit upon it; than that a Religion attested by *Miracles*, confirmed by *Prophecies*, and recommended by its own *internal Excellency*, should be *false*. God would not have suffered an Imposture to come recommended to us with such strong and commanding Evidences, as have deceived (if they were deceived) as *rational*, *inquisitive* and *disinterested* Men as ever *lived* in the World; Evidences so strong, that no *Instance* can be given of *any Thing else*, that was ever

SERM. III. *ſuſpected* to be falſe, which had ſo many and ſo bright Indications and Marks of Truth, as Chriſtianity has.

We ought to paſs the ſame Judgment upon God's Word, which we do upon his Works. In the latter there appear plain Signatures of Goodneſs and Wiſdom throughout the whole Frame of Nature. But if among the Works of the Creation, which are *generally* excellent, there are ſome *particular* Exceptions, ſome Creatures, for Inſtance, which, far from anſwering any wiſe End which we can diſcern, are really noxious and baneful to the reſt: What do we infer from thence? That the Creation is not the Work of a wiſe and good God? Or even, that theſe Creatures were not formed by him? No, no ſuch Thing: We conclude nothing, but that theſe Subjects lie too deep for us, and that our Views are too narrow to account for every Thing. Juſt ſo, the Characters of *Goodneſs* and *Wiſdom* are generally impreſſed upon the Bible: And if in a Book *generally* ſo good and excellent there are ſome *particular* Things *hard to be underſtood*, nay, ſeemingly abſurd; we ought to reſolve it into our Want of Penetration and Diſcernment: And we might

might as well argue, "several Things in "the Creation appear to us productive of "evil, and hurtful; and therefore, because "they are not of a Piece with the rest of "God's Works, they cannot be his Pro-"ductions;" as pretend to reason thus: "Such Texts seem unaccountable to us, "and therefore we will not allow them to "be written under the Direction of an "All-wise Being." Instead of such a precipitate Judgment, it would be much wiser to express ourselves as St. *Austin* did: "*What* "I *understand* in Scripture, is excellent; "and I do not question, but what I do *not* "understand is so too." We should remember, that a Book, which speaks of Things remote from common Apprehension, which lays before us *the deep Things of God*, must in the Nature of the Thing be more puzzling, than any Composition, which contains the shallow Devices of an Understanding like our own. SERM. III.

Men may retire into their Closets, and there imagine with themselves, how easy and plain a Book should be, which is of a divine Original, without any amazing Facts, without any dark and unintelligible Passages; and when they find that the Revelation

SERM. III.

which we have, does not tally with their vain Imaginations, may preſume to reject it. And, ſhould they, inſtead of looking abroad, and ſeeing what the Adminiſtration of the Univerſe is in *fact*, ſit down and form *imaginary* Schemes, how God ſhould govern the World; the Courſe of *Nature*, as it is in reality, would no more correſpond with their preconceived Hypotheſis, than the *Scriptures* do. They would never imagine *à priori*, that a conſiderable Part of the rational World ſhould be cut off, before they came to the Uſe of their Reaſon, and ſhould juſt make their Entrance upon the Theatre of Nature, to go out again, without ſeeming to anſwer one valuable End or Purpoſe: They would never conceive, without ſeeing how Things really are, that there ſhould be ſo much Evil, natural and moral, in the World; that ſeveral Nations ſhould *ſit in Darkneſs, and the Shadow of Death*.

One plain Argument, that God *has* made ſuch a Revelation as we have, ſhould outweigh a *thouſand plauſible Conjectures* brought againſt it, to ſhew, that it can be no Revelation from God; and that if it had, it muſt have been made in *ſuch* a Manner, and *no other*. The Reaſon is as follows: We can

can *eaſily judge* of the Strength of thoſe Arguments, which prove that God has, in *fact*, publiſhed his Will to Mankind; for they are *clear*, *full*, and *obvious*: But we are intirely *incompetent Judges*; how, in *what Manner*, with *what Degree* of Clearneſs in *every* Point, God, whoſe *Thoughts are not as our Thoughts*, ſhould publiſh his Will, *how much Light* it was proper he ſhould communicate, and what *Intricacies* he might ſuffer, on purpoſe to be the Teſts of humble well-diſpoſed Minds, and to be a *Stone of Stumbling, and a Rock of Offence*, to the Perverſe and Diſingenuous. We may conclude from the Uniformity of God's Proceedings, that his *revealed Will* muſt bear ſome Analogy and Correſpondence to the *Conſtitution of Nature*, as ſettled by him. And when every Thing can be *accounted for*, and is eaſy to be underſtood, in the Conduct of *his Providence*; then, and not till then, we ought to expect, that *every* Thing ſhould be ſo too in a *divine Revelation*. SERM. III.

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SERMON IV.

Preached at the

Lady *MOYER*'s LECTURE.

On the Corruption of Human Nature.

JOB XIV. 3, 4.

Doſt thou open thine Eyes upon ſuch an one? *and bringeſt me into Judgment with thee?. Who can bring a clean Thing out of an Unclean? Not one.*

THESE Words contain *Job*'s Expoſtulation with his Maker, and the Senſe of them, to uſe the Words of a great Writer, who clearly proves, that they have a plain Reference to the Introduction of Corruption, by the Sin

SERM. IV.

of the Woman, is as follows, "Why art "thou extreme to mark all my Errors? "Is it reaſonable to expect Purity in a "Man born of a Woman, who is by the "very Condition of his Birth unclean *?" The Diſobedience of our firſt Parents involved their Poſterity, and entailed a Depravity of Nature upon their Deſcendants: Which Depravity, though it is not a Sin in *us*, till the Will cloſes with it, and deliberately conſents to it; yet is certainly ſinful in *itſelf*, and therefore is ſtiled Original Sin. For if it were not ſo, if the firſt Riſe of evil Thoughts, and every Tendency and Bias to Vice were not criminal *in itſelf*; the Conſent of the Will to it could never *make* it *ſo*. For the Conſent of the Will cannot alter the *Nature* of Things.

St. *Paul*, Col. iii. 9, 10. ſays, *Ye have put off the old Man with his Deeds, and have put on the new Man, which is renewed in Knowledge* AFTER THE IMAGE *of Him, that created him*; or, as it is in another Place, *Epheſ.* iv. 24. *which after God is created in Righteouſneſs and true Holineſs.*

* Biſhop *Sherlock*'s Second Diſſertation, Pag. 253.

Now *to be renewed* after the Image of our Creator, ſignifies in the Original, to receive again, what we had once loſt. Man therefore once had (in his primitive State) that Image, to which he is to be reſtored by the Grace of our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*. This is the Senſe which *Irenæus*, a Father of the ſecond Century, puts upon theſe Words. For he ſays, "What we loſt in *Adam*, "*viz.* the divine Image and Likeneſs, we "receive again in *Chriſt Jeſus* *."

Adam was formed in the Image of God; and what that Image was, we learn from the foregoing Words of St. *Paul, that ye put on the new Man, which, after God* (after the Image of God) *is created in Righteouſneſs and true Holineſs*. It is plain, that we who are *ſhapen in Wickedneſs*, who are born with ſtrong Propenſions to Vice, are not *created in Righteouſneſs and true Holineſs*: It is plain therefore, that we are fallen from our original and primitive State of Innocence.

Far be it from me to villify human Nature, as if it were *totally* bad, without any Remains and Traces of its primitive Greatneſs. I own, that any Man may, through

* *Irenæus*, Lib. 3. cap. 20.

the

the Grace of God and his own Endeavours, ſtand clear of all *preſumptuous* Sins, and much more of all evil *Habits*. I own that our Paſſions are innocent in themſelves, though they are often wrong in their *Degree*, being not very ſeldom diſproportioned to the real Value of Things; very violent and exorbitant, where they ought to be moderate, and very moderate and remiſs, where there is no imminent Danger of Exceſs. I grant, that, though our Nature is *degenerated*, yet it is not entirely *inverted*, ſo as to have no Reliſh for Goodneſs; that we are not only capable of Virtue, but alſo of great Attainments therein; we may not only be virtuous, but even *excel in Virtue*.

Notwithſtanding, there are plain Proofs that we are fallen Creatures, from the Perverſeneſs of our Will, and the Weakneſs of our Underſtanding.

For no Creature could come *originally* from *God*'s Hand, but what was *perfect* in its *kind*: No *rational* Creature can be *perfect* in his kind, in whom there is a ſtrong Propenſion to *Vice*, that is, to what is *unreaſonable*, and a great *Irregularity* of the Appetites and Affections. Had Man continued ſuch as he was at firſt formed; the

the *Balance* certainly muſt have been, at leaſt, *even*, between the ſenſitive and intellectual Part in our Compoſition, between our Paſſion and our Reaſon: But that it is *not* ſo, is plain from this; that it is not the Province of Wiſdom to run into the Arms of a Temptation, and boldly to grapple with it; which when we do, we ſeldom fail of being foiled in the Conflict. But our Victory over Temptations is to decline a Combat with them; and a conſiderable Part of the Innocency, which is in the World, may be owing to the Want of Opportunities to commit Vice. There is a Stock of Corruption in us, though ſometimes unſuſpected by us, which often diſcovers itſelf, as ſoon as there are ſuitable Objects to call it forth. Hence it is, that few or none are to be truſted with abſolute Power; becauſe an unlimited Extent of Power gives thoſe vicious Inclinations their full Play, which before were cramped and confined within narrow Bounds. We do not diſtruſt ourſelves; becauſe we know not what is in ourſelves. Many, who would have ſaid in a private Capacity, *Is thy Servant a Dog, that he ſhould do theſe Things?* have done the very Things in a public

SERM. IV.

public Sphere, which they heartily condemned before. So much Reaſon is there for that Prayer, *Lord, deliver me from myſelf. He, that thinketh he ſtandeth, let him take heed, leſt he fall*; then moſt eſpecially, when he *thinketh* he ſtandeth. For Security is our Ruin: And the Minute we are off our Guard, we may be ſurprized into Vice by a *powerful Tempter*, who knows each Avenue to the Soul, or by our own *Paſſions*, the *moſt powerful* Tempters of All. And he, who is now virtuous, is no more ſecure of continuing ſo, without much Circumſpection, and the Grace of God; than he, who is in perfect Health, is ſafe againſt every Attack of Infection.

We ſee the wiſeſt of Men, in their unguarded Hours, betrayed into unaccountable Follies; we ſtartle at it, and cry out, *Lord, what is Man!* Why, a Being, who, without God's *upholding Power*, would the next Moment ſink into *Nothing*; and, without the Aſſiſtances of his *Spirit*, would be a Sinner, that is, *worſe than Nothing*; then always betraying his *Weakneſs*, when he depends preſumptuouſly upon his own *Strength*; a *Child* ever in this Reſpect, that, if left to himſelf, *without* the Guidance

and

and *Support* of his heavenly *Parent*, he would *fall* and *injure* himſelf. SERM. IV.

A Philoſopher, in his Cloſet, makes many admirable Reflexions, and lays down excellent Rules for the Conduct of Life, under any Affliction or Provocation; yet, among his *many* fine *Reflexions*, he forgets *this One*, as true as any of them, *viz.* that all theſe Thoughts are the Reſult of a Mind *at Eaſe*; and therefore will certainly vaniſh and diſappear, as ſoon as it is *not ſo*: Like the *Children of Ephraim*, who *being harneſſed, carrying Bows*, and making a goodly Appearance, *turned themſelves back in the Day of Battle*.

It is certain, that Reaſon was originally given us to govern the Paſſions in all Caſes: It is certain, that it does not now regulate and govern them in all Caſes; it is certain, therefore, that we are in a fallen diſordered State. To give ſome Inſtances: Are there many of us, who when any great, immediate, and unforeſeen Danger threatens, have ſo much Command of themſelves, as to have that juſt Degree of Fear, which is neceſſary to alarm their Caution, and to prevent any Raſhneſs; but is not ſo immoderate as to overſet the Spirits, and betray

SERM. V.

the Succours of Reaſon? If they have, they are more indebted for it to an *inborn Vigour* of Spirit, and a Familiarity with Danger, than to all the *Reaſonings*, which Philoſophy ever ſuggeſted. For that Courage, which depends upon Reaſon, is very precarious: It is like that Health, which is ſupported by conſtant Medicines: A native Strength of Conſtitution and conſtant Exerciſe are of infinitely more Service.

Take another Inſtance, how unequal the Conflict is between Reaſon and Paſſion. Suppoſe a Man overwhelmed with Sorrow; and produce your ſtrong Reaſons, why he ought not to grieve; and what will they avail? Length of Time ſhall abate and wear away that Sorrow, which Reaſon could not conquer: Nay, a trifling Diverſion, ſuited to the Capacity of a Child, ſhall have greater Influence than all the Conſolations of *Seneca* and *Epictetus*. To put a Man upon Thinking is not the moſt effectual Way of getting the better of immoderate Grief: The beſt Expedient is to divert his Thoughts. We confeſs ourſelves to be *miſerable Sinners*; and we are therefore *moſt miſerable* under any Diſtreſs, *becauſe* we are *Sinners*: And Sin, which is the Sting

Sting of *Death*, is likewiſe that of *Sorrow*. Were all right within their own Breaſts, Men in Affliction might retreat within themſelves, with as much Satisfaction, as they retire home, when the Storm beats hard upon them abroad. But the Reaſon, why they ſhun *themſelves*, much more than the *World* does *them*, when unfortunate, is; that, whatever Self-Complacency a Fulneſs of Spirits, the natural Reſult of uninterrupted Proſperity, might inſpire; Adverſity lowers their Thoughts as well as Spirits, and ſhews them to themſelves in a Glaſs, which gives their real, not a flattering Likeneſs. SERM. IV.

The Paſſions are certain *Willings* and *Nillings* in the Soul, attended with a *Commotion* of the *Blood* and *Spirits*. From hence an Argument may be drawn, that we are not in a primitive State of Order and Rectitude: For if we were, the Soul muſt be veſted with a Power of *curbing* and controling; or *quickening* and exciting the Animal Spirits, according as *Reaſon* directs. But that the Soul is not inveſted with this Prerogative, we need not look far for Inſtances. For Example, Men of a cold phlegmatic Temper, have *Senſe* enough to

SERM. IV.

ſee their Duty, but not *Spirit* enough to act up to it *reſolutely* in *all* Caſes; a melancholy Chilneſs damps their Endeavours; and they bring no *Fruit* to Perfection, for *want* of a *kindly Warmth* to ripen it. *Forbearances* indeed of Action are always in their Power; and therefore they need not to be *poſitively bad*, or commit any preſumptuous Sin; but it is not in their Power, without the extraordinary Grace of God, to reach the *utmoſt Heights* and Attainments in *Virtue*. For Reaſon, abſtractedly from ſtrong Paſſions, is a ſedentary Principle; it is like the *Genius* of *Socrates*, which rather checked and reſtrained him when he was going to do wrong, than put him upon vigorouſly purſuing what was right.

On the other hand, the Men, in whoſe Compoſition Fire and Spirit is the predominant Ingredient, have an irregular Greatneſs of Soul, and ſtrange Inequalities in their Conduct: The Great and the Extravagant bordering ſo near, that the Tranſition is eaſy from the one to the other. A generous Ardour of Soul is not many Removes diſtant from Enthuſiaſm and chimerical Deſigns: They *deſpiſe* and diſdain *little* and *low* Sins, as what would make them

them cheap; but they do not, it may be, *deteſt* and abhor *great* Vices. Whereas, there is a certain *Point* in Virtue and Vice, a certain *determined Proportion*, of Goodneſs and Wickedneſs, beyond which Men of *cool* and languid Affections dare not venture to proceed; they, on the contrary, have always been *eminently good*, or *exceeding ſinful*, or both at different Times. One would think, their good Senſe ſhould govern their enterprizing Spirit and Ambition: Alas! too often, unleſs they have got a Habit of Recollection, their Ambition and fiery Spirit get the better of their good Senſe. SERM. IV.

If Men proceed to Action while their Paſſions are warm, they do not ſee Things juſtly, and therefore are apt to act too haſtily: If they ſtay till their Paſſions are cool; they are apt not to act at all; their Reſolutions, like Fruit, that rots by hanging too long on the Tree, come to Nothing.

But to ſhew more effectually, that we are a Set of lapſed and diſtempered Creatures, let it be obſerved, that we do not love or hate, rejoice or grieve, hope or fear, *ſo far*, as is conſiſtent with *Reaſon*, and *no farther*. We love the Things of this World, *beyond* the Proportion of Good

which is in them: The Love of Virtue and heavenly Happineſs does not *keep Pace* with the *Worth* of the Objects beloved. The leaſt Glance of Reflexion will ſhew, how often we have been *diſquieted* with *little* Things, and *pleaſed* with as little. Strange! that we ſhould not make one Reflexion more, *viz.* how *little* we *ourſelves* muſt be, who can be thus pleaſed and diſquieted above meaſure. The fear of Evils to come, is often more tormenting than the Evils themſelves: There is *only one* Thing we cannot dread too much, and that it is God's Diſpleaſure. *For even thereafter as a Man feareth,* ſayeth the Pſalmiſt, *ſo is his Diſpleaſure:* That is, let a Man's Fears be raiſed to never ſo high a Pitch; God's Diſpleaſure is an Evil fully proportioned to them: Yet fearing every other Ill too much, we have not juſt Apprehenſions of his Vengeance. Is there a Man who does not feel the Force of *Iſaiah*'s ſignificant Expoſtulation? *Who art thou, that thou ſhouldeſt be afraid of a Man that ſhall die, and of the Son of Man, that ſhall be made as Graſs? And forgetteſt the Lord thy Maker, who ſtretched out the Heavens, and laid the Foundation of the Earth?* Yet this Being, awfully juſt, the

almoſt

almoſt only Object, *that ought to be feared,* is the almoſt only Object, which we *do not* ſufficiently fear. And he can be regardleſs of the Wrath of an *Almighty God,* who is intimidated by a *Shadow,* an *Inſect,* a *Worm,* and the *Son of Man, who is a Worm:* How many virtuous Actions are owing to natural Conſtitution, and to a Regard for our Reputation? How little Virtue is there any where practiſed through a Senſe of Religion? Men do not revere *themſelves* in ſecret, becauſe they do not ſufficiently revere *that Being who ſeeth in ſecret,* and *will reward* or puniſh them *openly:* But they reverence the *World* and dread its Cenſures. What a Contradiction is Man! this Minute perhaps indulging *ſerious Reflexions,* the next, the *Sport of idle Paſſions.* If we raiſe our Thoughts to the Author of our Being; the leaſt Trifle, the leaſt ſtriking Object upon Earth, ſhall be able to divert our Attention, and to call off our Mind, which was on the Wing, from Heaven. The Truth is, ever ſince the Fall, the Body clogs the native Energy of the Soul, and pins it down to this low ignoble Sphere; though it has an inborn Conſciouſneſs of being intended for a much higher and no-

bler Scene of Action. The Soul is like a King dethroned, who, though confined and impriſoned in a *Dungeon*, is conſcious, that he was *born* to, and deſigned for a *Throne*. We feel *a Law in our Members, warring againſt the Law of our Mind, and bringing us into Captivity*. And to have all our Thoughts laid open to the View of the World, to be *naked*, yet *not aſhamed*, might do well enough in a State of Innocence, but does not ſuit our lapſed Condition.

A Being of infinite *Holineſs and Purity*, who *hates* Sin, could not produce a Being into the World without any Contagion derived in a natural Way from our firſt Parents, who ſhould labour under a *moral Impoſſibility* of avoiding *all Sin*, at all Times. Now that Man labours under a moral Impoſſibility of avoiding *all Sin*, at all Times, is evident from hence, *viz.* that, what no *mere Man* ever *did* do, it is morally impoſſible, any Man ever *ſhould* do. Now no mere Man, from the firſt Stage of his Exiſtence to the laſt Period of it, ever diſcharged all the Duties of Life, without any Omiſſion, and abſtained from the Commiſſion of every Vice. It is evident therefore, to the Force of a Demonſtration, that Man

Man is a fallen Creature, and not ſuch as he came, originally, out of the Hands of an infinitely pure and holy Being. *Who can ſay, I have made my Heart clean, I am pure from my Sin?* Prov. xx. 9. In many *Things we offend all.* SERM. IV.

Into what can this *univerſal Depravation*, which prevails every where, more or leſs, among the Sons of Men, be reſolved, but into an *univerſal Cauſe*, the inborn Corruption of Nature, and an original Taint, derived from our firſt Parents? Can it be reſolved into Education? Many Parents, after all the Care which they have laid out, in educating their Children virtuouſly, have Reaſon to expoſtulate, as God, the common Parent of us all, does in *Iſaiah*, *What could have been done more to my Vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked, that it ſhould bring forth Grapes, brought it forth wild Grapes?* The only Way to educate Children rightly, is to teach them early to deny themſelves the Gratification of thoſe irregular Appetites, which Nature has implanted *. Self-will,

* Vidi ego, & expertus ſum Zelantem parvulum. Nondum loquebatur, & intuebatur pallidus amaro Aſpectu collactaneum ſuum. Sancti *Auguſtini Confeſſ.* Lib. I. cap. 7.

Stubborn-

SERM. IV.

Stubbornneſs, and an Inclination to Things forbidden, merely becauſe they are forbidden, diſcover themſelves even in our Infancy: Vice is the natural Product of the Soil; the more uncultivated the Mind is, the more it is over-run with it: But Virtue is the ſlow laborious Reſult of repeated Self-Denials, Hardſhips, and Difficulties.

If Mankind were in a State of Integrity, and primitive Uprightneſs; there could ſcarce be, one would think, ſo much Evil in the World, as there really is. A great Part of Mankind ſeems to reſemble the *Dæmoniac* in the Goſpel, who *had been often bound with Fetters and Chains; and the Chains had been plucked aſunder by him, and the Fetters broken in Pieces, and no Man could tame him.* They are curbed and reſtrained by divine and human Laws, by temporal Penalties, and the Dread of eternal Miſery; and yet one impetuous Paſſion breaks through all theſe ſtrong Fences, juſt *as a Thread of Tow is ſnapped aſunder, when it toucheth the Fire.* It argues a ſtrange Ignorance of the World, to expect that Men ſhould be ſwayed by *calm rational* Motives only, and by the Charms of Virtue. The very Neceſſity of Govern-

ment is founded chiefly upon this, that Men are not fit to be truſted with the Government of themſelves, without any Check or Control upon them. And if any Man ſhould attempt to govern a ſingle Family only, by pure Reaſon, without exerting any Act of Authority; Experience would ſoon convince him, that he had been forming a viſionary Scheme. How comes it, unleſs we are in a State of Degeneracy, that Reaſon, which was originally deſigned to be the governing Principle, is ſo feeble; and the Paſſions, which ſhould be ſubject to it, ſo headſtrong? SERM. IV.

Man was originally formed for the Knowledge of God, and Worſhip of him only: Yet, in all Countries unenlightened by Revelation, Men were ſo far from knowing and adoring the true God, that they were univerſally immerſed in Idolatry and Superſtition. All the Nations even now, as well as of old, where Revelation hath not got Footing, bear Teſtimony to the Weakneſs of human Underſtanding. The Worſhip of God in Spirit and in Truth, was not diſcovered by us, it was revealed to us. And what Mankind did not aſcertain for ſo many Ages, till the Propagation of Chriſtianity;

SERM. IV.

Chriſtianity; they probably would never have diſcovered, to the End of the World, if left to themſelves, without any Aſſiſtances from Heaven. But theſe, you will ſay, were the Errors of the Groſs of the Species: The Philoſophers knew undoubtedly and taught better Things. So far from that, that they admitted as great Abſurdities, only of another Kind: Some of them aſſerting God to be the Soul of the World, of which our Souls are ſo many Parts, and into which they were to be reſolved, after the Diſſolution of the Body; others of them maintaining, that the *Æther*, or empty Space, was God; others, the whole World; and ſome few only contending, that he was an infinite Mind, which great Truth, however, they blended with very erroneous Notions.

Again, Man was formed for *loving his Neighbour as himſelf*. Yet the World is generally inclined to the ill-natured Side, ſlow to believe what is advantageous to a Man's Character, but ready to credit any blackening Reports. Are Men *grateful* in proportion as they are *reſentful?* Their Hearts burn within them with Reſentment for an Injury received; nay, ſometimes

times for a Favour refuſed: But do they feel as lively a Glow of Gratitude, when ſome Kindneſs is done them?

Obſerve the Man, who makes Pretenſions to an exalted and diſintereſted Benevolence: Perhaps, after all his Pretenſions, an *agreeable* enchanting *Form* ſhall make its Way irreſiſtibly to his Heart, and, at a Heat, *in a Moment*, ſtamp upon his Mind *more tender* and endearing Sentiments, and recommend the Perſon, who is the Owner of it, *more powerfully* to his *Affection*, than *long-tried* and approved *Worth*, and an uninterrupted *Intercourſe* of *friendly Offices*, can another, who is *deſtitute* of *that* Advantage. There is nothing ſo inſignificant, *by* which we differ from one another, but *about* which we may differ likewiſe: Inſomuch, that the Word *Difference*, which originally ſignifies, that Things are not the ſame, is made uſe of to expreſs Diſcord and Animoſity. It is as well our Duty in point of Benevolence, though it be not ſo much in Faſhion, to encourage Merit and Ingenuity, as it is to relieve Diſtreſs. Yet, though *Men of Merit* are often preferred, how few in compariſon have been preferred *merely as Men of Merit*, without any other

SERM. IV.

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Conſideration? Nay, perhaps it would be for the Advantage of thoſe, who are poſſeſſed of uncommon Worth, to do, as *Moſes* did, when his Face ſhone with heavenly Glory, ſo that the *Iſraelites could not ſtedfaſtly behold it, viz.* to *draw a Veil* over it, and to moderate that Luſtre, which is painful to moſt Eyes, and inſupportable to diſtempered ones. The Bulk of Mankind regard a Man in proportion to what he is worth, the *only* Worth, that ſome ſeem to have any Notion of.

Again, we were deſigned for an exact Knowledge of ourſelves. Yet, ſeeing *every Thing elſe through a Glaſs darkly*, we ſee *ourſelves* through a *flattering* Glaſs, in the faireſt and *brighteſt* Light. But could we, ſeveral of us, view ourſelves juſt as we are, without thoſe falſe Colours, and gilded Luſtre, which Self-Love ſheds around its Votaries; it might be a greater Miſery to us, than any we ever felt. For, in all other Caſes, an imaginary Worth affords a fantaſtic Pleaſure, which buoys up our Spirits, and is a kind of Counterpoiſe to thoſe Sufferings, which we undergo, however ſolid and real: But in this Caſe, Miſery, genuine Miſery, would have its full

full Effect without any Conſideration to break the Force of it. Many of us muſt, in ſome meaſure, *deceive ourſelves* to be tolerably *happy*: To diſabuſe the Mind of its *ill-grounded Eſteem*, and ſtrip it of *every agreeable* but wrong Idea, would ſink ſeveral of us into a Set of joyleſs, dull, ſpiritleſs Creatures. It would be to turn us out of a *Fool's Paradiſe*, where the Mind was delightfully loſt and bewildered, among *gay Deluſions* and fine *viſionary Scenes*, into a *dreary Heath* and barren *Wilderneſs*, where there was little or *nothing goodly*, *fair*, and *amiable*. SERM. IV.

Laſtly, we were formed for the Attainment of beneficial Truths. Yet there are not many certain Truths, demonſtrable from *intrinſic* Evidences, from the abſtract Nature of the Thing; though Reaſon can prove ſeveral, by the Help of *external* Evidences. Setting Revelation aſide, Mankind would have Reaſon to wiſh that they did not know ſo *much* as they do; or that they knew a *great deal more*. At preſent they have juſt Knowledge enough to diſquiet and perplex them, but not enough, without the Scriptures, to make them eaſy. In a total Darkneſs they would view Nothing

thing at all, and in a full Day-Light they would view Objects clearly and juſtly: But in a Twilight of Knowledge they imagine they ſee Things, that are *not*; and ſee Things, that *are otherwiſe* than they really are. Youth, ſanguine Youth, may be poſitive and peremptory, and fanſy it knows every Thing, becauſe as yet it knows Nothing fully. But Men, who have read, and ſtudied, and thought much; towards the Cloſe of Life retain ſcarce one Sentiment unaltered and unimproved, which they had at their firſt Entrance upon their Studies: Juſt as that famed Veſſel, which had been in ſeveral Voyages, and firſt ſailed round the Globe, had ſcarce one Plank the ſame, upon its laſt Arrival in Port, with which it was firſt launched. There are ſeveral conſiderable Truths, which, like the great Author of Truth, *dwell in Light which no Man can approach to*: Whatever Evidences they may be ſurrounded with, they are *inacceſſible to us*.

I might proceed, to demonſtrate the Truth of the Fall from thoſe plain Monuments of it, thoſe Miſeries which, in Conſequence of it, were introduced into the World. Can it be proved, that natural

Good

Good and natural Evil are ſo cloſely connected, that there could not be ſuch a Quantity of natural Good, except there was juſt ſuch a Quantity of natural Evil too? That, for Inſtance, the World could not be ſo happy; except there were ſo many acute and painful Diſeaſes, ſo many noxious Inſects, Famines, Eruptions from burning Mountains, *&c.*? Are theſe, what God, upon a Review of the Creation, pronounced *very good*? No, there is no accounting for ſo much *natural* Evil; except it was ſent as a ſtanding Indication of God's Diſpleaſure againſt thoſe *moral* Diſorders, which prevailed in the World, conſequent to the Fall. SERM. IV.

People may, I know, ſtart many Difficulties upon this Head. But it is, I think, not ſo reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that God created Man *originally bad*; as that, when Man *had* corrupted his Nature, he let that Corruption deſcend upon his Poſterity, in a *natural* Way. Juſt as it would be more irreconcileable to the Sentiments which we have of the Deity, to imagine he would *immediately* form a Creature *diſordered* in his Senſes; than that, when a Parent had brought this Diſtemper upon himſelf by

Debauchery, he permitted the Madneſs to *devolve* upon his *Children*.

It is one Thing to ſay, that *God* was, or could be the *Author of Evil*; and another to ſay, that, when Evil was *introduced* by *Man*, he did not work a *Miracle*, to prevent the *natural* Conſequences of it; but *ſuffered* it for the ſake of bringing a *greater* Good out of it; and that by the *Redemption*, he has advanced Man to much *ſuperior* Happineſs, than he could have had any Title to, if he had *continued* in a State of *Innocence*. This is the ſcriptural Solution of the Difficulty. *Where Sin abounded, Grace did much more abound. As in Adam all die; ſo in Chriſt ſhall all be made alive. As by one Man Sin entered into the World, and Death by Sin; ſo the Grace of God hath abounded unto all Men, through Jeſus Chriſt.* This was the *Labour of Love* (if *any* Thing to *Love* can be a *Labour*) to countervail the ill Effects of the Fall, by an univerſal Remedy.

However great a Myſtery the Tranſmiſſion of Sin may be, which yet is not a greater Difficulty, than the Tranſmiſſion of Madneſs, or any other Diſeaſe, from Father

Father to Son: Yet *Man*, without this Clue to unravel the Intricacies of his Nature, is a *greater Myſtery to himſelf*, than the *Tranſmiſſion* of Sin can be to *him*. Original Sin cannot be ſo inconceivable by him, as he is by himſelf without it. For, pray obſerve: It cannot enter into the Head of Man to conceive greater Inconſiſtencies, Abſurdities, and Contrarieties; than he may find, if he looks honeſtly and fairly into it, in his own Heart. How many pious Reſolutions he forms, which, perhaps, die in Embryo, before they ripen into Birth; and yet how many fooliſh and vain Projects: His Thoughts now aſpiring to, and graſping after, heavenly Happineſs, and anon ſinking into the Dregs of Corruption! He is a ſtrange Compound of Excellency and Baſeneſs; of the Angel and the Brute; a motly Mixture of Knowledge and Ignorance, of Virtue and Vice, of Happineſs and Miſery; the Fleſh warring againſt the Spirit, and the Spirit againſt the Fleſh; two ſuch mortal Enemies, that they are continually jarring and oppoſing each other; and yet two ſuch dear Friends, that they dread a Separation from each other.

Let then the Difficulties of the Fall be never ſo great; yet there is no getting rid of them, but at the Expence of an Abſurdity, the greateſt of Abſurdities, *viz.* that Creatures ſo corrupt as we are, could be *immediately* formed by an *infinitely perfect* God, (who cannot behold Iniquity and Corruption with Pleaſure) *without* any *Contagion derived* from, and tranſmitted to us by, our firſt Parents. Let a Man look within himſelf, and he will find, he will feel, a Demonſtration of one Part of the Scriptures, the Truth of the Fall: Or, if he cannot ſee it there, he will prove by his very Blindneſs the Truth which he denies. But if he admits this Part of the Scriptures to be true, I cannot perceive, why he ſhould demur as to the reſt. For there is no Part of them which is attended with greater Difficulties. "I appeal *(ſays a "lively Writer)* to yourſelf, in your own "Degree of Goodneſs, if you could create "your own Children, whether you would "not create them in a better State, and "with leſs of Evil, than that in which "you was born yourſelf. Therefore, only "ſuppoſing God to have your Degree of "Goodneſs, he could not have created "the

" the firſt Man, from whom your Nature " is derived, in the State that you are; and " therefore, ſuppoſing him only to be good, " you have ſufficient Proof; but ſuppoſing " him to be, what he undoubtedly is, in- " finitely good, you have a full Demon- " ſtration, that you are a fallen Creature, " or not in that State in which God cre- " ated you." SERM. IV.

What remains, but that we ſtrive to recover that Happineſs by *thinking ſoberly*, which our firſt Parents forfeited by *ambitious and aſpiring* Thoughts. Humility is the Valley, in which Benevolence (and every other Virtue) delights to grow. For whatever Profeſſions of Benevolence proud Men may make; Pride and Benevolence are utterly inconſiſtent. He, who is big with the Sentiments of his Dignity, muſt have an Averſion to thoſe, who do not ſeem to have as exalted an Opinion of him, as he has of himſelf. Now, as none can think as extravagantly of a proud Man, as he thinks of himſelf; the Conſequence is, that he muſt hate all Mankind, except a few Flatterers. He muſt be angry with thoſe, who do not proportion their Regard to his *imaginary Deſerts*, which it is impoſſible to do.

SERM. IV.

For though it be no difficult Matter to diſcern how much Merit another Man *really has*; it is not quite ſo eaſy to determine, how much he may *imagine* himſelf to have. Therefore no *proud* Perſon can be a benevolent and *moral Man*; and no *humble* Perſon brought up in the Chriſtian and Proteſtant Religion, one would be apt to think, can be a *mere moral* Man. For he, who is humble, will not truſt in his own Righteouſneſs, or make any proud Pretenſions to exalted Worth. The Conſideration and Senſe of his Unworthineſs, will diſpoſe him to accept the Offers of Salvation by Jeſus Chriſt, and make him endeavour to fulfil the Terms of it. He, who has no high Notions of his own Merits, will be glad to be accepted by thoſe of his bleſſed Saviour.

SERMON

SERMON V.

On the REDEMPTION.

In Two SERMONS.

Preached in part, at the Lady *Moyer*'s Lecture, in the Year 1733; and, since that Time, considerably altered.

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1 PETER III. 18.

Christ also hath once suffered for Sins, the Just for the Unjust, that he might bring us unto God.

SERM. V.

WHAT is said of the great Duties of Morality, and the Difference between Virtue and Vice, *viz. Ask your own Heart, and Nothing is so plain: It is to mistake them costs the Pain and Time*; may, with a little Variation, be applied to the fundamental Doctrines of

SERM. V.

Chriſtianity, *viz.* the Trinity and Satisfaction: *Search the Scriptures*, and Nothing can be plainer, or more *eaſy* to find there: *Not* to find them there, or, to ſpeak more properly, to *explain* them *away* when found, requires a great deal of Labour, Subtlety, and uncommon Dexterity. The natural Import of the Words of my Text is this, that Chriſt died, not merely for our Benefit, as an Example of Patience, and to confirm the Truth of his Doctrine, by his Blood; but, as a propitiatory Sacrifice for the Sins of Mankind, that we might, by virtue of his meritorious Sufferings, be redeemed from the Puniſhment due to them. The Words of St. *Paul*, *Romans* v. 7, 8. confirm the Senſe of this Text, *Scarcely for a Righteous Man will one die: Yet peradventure, for a good Man ſome would even dare to die. But God commendeth his Love towards us, in that, while we were yet Sinners, Chriſt died for us.* Our Saviour died for us, in the ſame Senſe, that one Man would dare to die for another, whom he greatly loved, by ſubſtituting himſelf in the room of us Sinners. So *David* ſays, *Would to God, I had died for thee*, or inſtead of Thee. *O Abſalom, my Son.* God

hath

hath made him, who knew no Sin, to be Sin, SERM. V.
or an Offering for Sin, *for us.* Accordingly *Iſaiah* ſaid: *Thou ſhalt make his Soul an Offering for Sin.*

Again; our Saviour is ſaid to *bear our Iniquities.* The obvious Senſe of which Paſſages will appear, by comparing it with another: *The Son ſhall not bear the Iniquities of the Father,* i. e. the Son ſhall not ſuffer inſtead of, or for the Sins, of the Father.

In a word, the Scripture Proofs of the Redemption are ſo many, that it would be endleſs to quote them All; and ſo well known, that it is almoſt needleſs to quote any: And we muſt either look upon a Doctrine, which is inculcated in ſuch a Variety of Expreſſions, and upon which ſuch an uncommon Streſs is laid, to be of the very Eſſence of Chriſtianity; or we muſt look upon the Scriptures, as a Book not deſigned to teach and inform, but to confound, puzzle, and miſlead Mankind.

And ſince our Adverſaries pretend, they have recourſe to a figurative Senſe; becauſe the literal one, in their Opinion, is big with Abſurdities; I ſhall therefore endeavour,

Iſt,

SERM. V.

Iſt, To diſprove and confute thoſe Schemes, which they have advanced, in Oppoſition to the true Scripture Doctrine of our Salvation by Jeſus Chriſt.

IIdly, I ſhall make it my Buſineſs to reſcue the Method of our Salvation, as laid down in Sacred Writ, from the Charge of Abſurdities, with which they load it.

Iſt then, I ſhall endeavour to diſprove and confute thoſe Schemes, which they have advanced, in oppoſition to the true Scripture Doctrine of Salvation by Jeſus Chriſt.

The firſt Scheme which I ſhall conſider is, That our own intrinſic Worth, or right Behaviour, muſt be the Foundation of our Acceptance with God; and not what another has done for us; which can never render us perſonally pleaſing to, or approved by God.

The ſecond Hypotheſis, which will fall under Conſideration is, That God is obliged to accept of Repentance, in lieu of perfect Obedience, without any Atonement.

As

As to the firſt,

It is alledged, that God does not approve, or diſapprove, from capricious Humour or arbitrary Pleaſure, but from the real Valuableneſs or Unworthineſs of ſuch the Object of his Approbation or Diſlike: And that therefore, Nothing but Mens right Behaviour could make them the Objects of God's Favour.

To unravel which Fallacy,

In the firſt Place, we muſt carefully diſtinguiſh between the *Approbation*, and the *Good-will*, or *Benevolence*, of the Deity. For the Deity juſt ſo far approves of Beings, as they are really *good*, and his Approbation is always proportioned to the ſeveral Degrees of Goodneſs in them. But his *Benevolence* needs not keep exact *Pace* with, and be *determined* ſolely, and wholly, by his Approbation and their Goodneſs. The *Approbation* of an unerring Being muſt, in the Nature of the Thing, be founded on ſomething *intrinſic*, and *in* the Beings *approved*: But his *Benevolence* often does, and in ſome Caſes muſt, proceed from Motives *extrinſic* to the Beings themſelves: Of which, among many others, the Communication of *greater* Degrees of Happineſs to *ſome* Beings

SERM. V.

Beings than *others*, *antecedently* to, and therefore without any Regard to, their *Merits* at the Creation, is a pregnant Inſtance. And he who made ſome Beings *Angels* and not *Men*, for no other Reaſon than his own WILL; may, certainly, advance us from *Men* into *Angels* of Bliſs, at the *Inſtance* and *Interceſſion* of our bleſſed Saviour. It may be granted, that the Deity cannot love any Being farther, than it is lovely in itſelf, with a Love of *Eſteem*, *Complacency*, or *Good-liking*. And yet there may be a conſiderable Degree of *Benevolence* and *Good-will* in the Deity, towards Beings, for whom he has but a ſlender Share of Eſteem and Approbation. The Reaſon is very plain: The *Benevolence* of the Deity is *infinite*; but his *Approbation* is *finite*, and *adjuſted* to the intrinſic Worth of each Creature, be it leſs or more. Our perſonal Valuableneſs therefore, or our right Behaviour, may be the only Ground of the divine *Approbation*; but God forbid, that it ſhould be the only Ground of his *Favour* and *Acceptance*. Suppoſing the Deity to be infinitely Good, and to take a *Delight* in communicating *Happineſs* to his Creatures, there will always be a ſtrong Reaſon

Reaſon *for* his Beneficence, or the Communication of Good to us, when there lies no Reaſon *againſt* it. The only Reaſons, that could lie againſt it, were—either that we are Subjects intirely indiſpoſed for, and incapable of, Happineſs, though our *evil* and inveterate *Habits*—or that it is not conſiſtent with God's Wiſdom, Juſtice, and his Regard for the Whole, to admit us to a State of an exceeding and everlaſting Weight of Glory. The firſt Impediment we *ourſelves*, by the Grace of God, muſt remove, by correcting each habitually bad Diſpoſition and Bent of Inclination. The ſecond our bleſſed Saviour removed, by the Sacrifice of himſelf, made it conſiſtent with the Good of the Whole, to beſtow Happineſs upon us, and gave the divine Benevolence full Scope to exert itſelf. SERM. V.

Though nothing that another Perſon does, can make us more perſonally *valuable*, yet the common Courſe of Things every Day proves, that, what another Perſon does, may avert *Miſery* from us, or procure *Happineſs* to us. If there is any Thing wrong in ſuch a Procedure, then the whole Courſe of Nature is manifeſtly ſo: It being neceſſary in the ordinary Courſe

of

SERM. V.

of Nature, which is no leſs God's Appointment than his ſupernatural and extraordinary Diſpenſations; that one Man ſhould be reſcued from Ruin, or advanced to Happineſs, by the Interpoſition of another *.

And the Arguments, which are brought to diſprove *the Grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, conclude with equal Strength (that is, with no Strength at all) againſt the Charity of our Fellow-creatures. The Laws of Nature, as well as the Oeconomy of our Redemption, point out to us, that, though no Man can with Juſtice be *eſteemed* for what another Agent does; yet *One* may be made *more happy*, or leſs miſerable, by the Means of Another.

The Author of the Book of *Job* ſeems to have had no Notion of founding the Favour of God to us, merely upon his Approbation of us, when he ſays, *God chargeth his Angels with Folly: The Stars are not pure in his Sight: How much leſs Man that is a Worm, and the Son of Man that is a Worm?*

Created Beings, that are perfect in their kind, God muſt abſolutely approve; Beings,

* See Biſhop *Butler*'s Analogy, Page 211.

that are abſolutely bad, he muſt abſolutely diſapprove. But between Perfection, and abſolute Depravity, there are ſo many intermediate Degrees of Goodneſs, and its oppoſite Quality; of Amiableneſs and Unamiableneſs; and theſe often ſo complicated and blended together in the ſame Subject; that no one can be aſſured, how the Scale would preponderate, or where the Over-balance would be, in the Judgment of that Being, *who ſees not as Man ſees.* Nay, the more amiable any Man was in the Sight of God, the more liable he would be, upon this Scheme, to Deſpondency, not to ſay, Deſpair. For certainly, if any Thing can make ſuch Beings as we are, amiable in the Sight of God; it muſt be a modeſt Opinion of ourſelves, and a juſt Senſe of our own Unworthineſs. But the more modeſt Opinion a Man entertains of himſelf; the more diffident he will be of his own Righteouſneſs, and the Divine Approbation.

So true it is, that whoever has deviated from Scripture, has left us, at the Foot of the Account, in a worſe State than he found us.

For

For what is this intrinſic Valuableneſs, on which ſome lay ſo great Streſs? Are we not like thoſe Things, which, to be greatly admired, muſt not be thoroughly underſtood? It is *Ignorance*, which is the *Mother* of *Admiration* of our *Fellow-creatures*: True *Knowledge* is the Mother of ſound and *ſubſtantial Devotion*. For the more we know of *Men*, the *leſs* we ſhall be apt to *admire* them: But our *Admiration* of *God* riſes higher, in *proportion* to the *Knowledge* we have gained of his Nature and Works: And our Devotion to him, who only is *wonderful*, and only doeth *wondrous* Things, muſt be heightened in the ſame Meaſure, as our Admiration is; unleſs our Reaſon was given us, as one expreſſeth it, "to wonder at our Maker, but not to ſerve "him." There are few, but who would rather depart out of the World, than have their fooliſh, vain, and wicked Thoughts, and whatever was tranſacted behind the Scene, within our own Breaſts, diſcloſed, without Reſerve, to the View of the whole World. Nature is very often rebelling againſt Principle, and ſometimes getting the better of it. The Paſſions haſty and impetuous, unleſs we have an habitual Guard

upon ourſelves, hurry us into Action, and plunge us into Folly; before Reaſon, a ſlow ſedentary Principle, puts in its Remonſtrances. And what is the Conſequence? That very Reaſon, which either continued in a State of Inaction, or poorly and abjectly complied with their Demands, acts the Part of an *after-wiſe* Friend, who, though he does not reſtrain us from doing wrong, yet, as ſoon as the Action is done, upbraids us with pungent Reflexions, and tells us *(ſad Truth!) that we are Fools.* SERM. V.

When we conſider the Number, Malignity, and particular Aggravations of our Sins, a *modeſt* ingenuous Man will be ſenſible he *wants* a Redeemer; and the *Preſumptuous betrays* his Want of one, even by his *being ſo.* We have Vanities enow, and too many; but let us not *add* to the Catalogue of them this *one* Vanity, more groſs and flagrant than all the reſt, *viz.* to imagine, that our *finite imperfect* Services can, of themſelves, inſure to us, what is of *infinite* Value, *perfect*, *endleſs*, and unalterable *Happineſs.*

He, who *thinks* he has Worth *enough* to ſecure a Title to abſolute Pardon and a Fulneſs of Bliſs, *proves* by the very *Thought*

SERM. V.

that he has too *little*. For we then give the beſt Proofs of our Worthineſs when we have a deep Senſe, and make an humble Confeſſion of our own Unworthineſs. Human Nature, conſcious of its numerous Frailties, ſhrinks back at the Thoughts of an Interview with its Creator; and Nothing can diſarm Death of its Terrors, but that Religion, which has made us the moſt gracious Overtures; and in which the awful *Majeſty* of the *Judge* is qualified by the lovely *Mercies* of the *Saviour*. None of us can merit: And after All we can do, (though none of us do all we can) we are but *unprofitable Servants*: But he makes the *neareſt* Approaches to *Merit*, who, after his ſincere Endeavours to pleaſe his Maker, humbly *diſclaims* all *Merit*, *but* ——the all-ſufficient *Merits* of his bleſſed *Saviour*.

If any Doubt remain with any one whether the divine Approbation, and the divine Favour, are equivalent and ſynonymous Terms; let him, to put the Matter paſt Diſpute, reflect, what a Difference there is between theſe two Petitions: God *approve* of me, a Sinner: And, God be *favourable* or *merciful* to me, a Sinner.

The

The former is highly ridiculous and abſurd. For it is impoſſible, that God ſhould *approve* Sinners, as ſuch; and the beſt of us are but *penitent* Sinners: But it is not impoſſible, that he may be *merciful* and *benevolent* to Thoſe, whom he cannot approve, as far as they are Sinners: (For otherwiſe, he would never have commanded us to hate and diſapprove the Sin, but yet to regard the Sinner with a Love of *Benevolence*.) Which Benevolence of the Deity may exert itſelf in Acts of ſolid and ſubſtantial Favour, when our Saviour's Satisfaction hath made it no ways interfere with the Ends of his Government, and the general Good.

In ſhort, we muſt *ſo far*, or in ſuch a low Degree, approve ourſelves to God, as to be deemed by him Subjects not incapable of, or diſqualified for, everlaſting Happineſs. But when that is done; it is through Chriſt alone, that the Weakneſs of our Endeavours muſt be *pardoned*, and the *Sincerity* of them *accepted*.

Which brings me, ſecondly, to diſtinguiſh between a *Capacity* for a Thing, and a *Title* to a Thing. Nothing, but what *internally* alters the Sinner, can make him a

SERM. V.

Subject *capable* of God's Favour hereafter. A *Capacity* for everlasting Happiness, must be partly founded on our own *good Habits* and Dispositions; since heavenly Pleasures cannot suit a Soul, that is deeply and habitually immersed in Vice. But the *Title* to Happiness must be founded on something *extrinsic*. We are told, that we shall be ἰσάγγελοι, *equal to the Angels* hereafter. Now, though Man had *never sinned*, he had no more *Ground* to *expect*, that he should be *as the Angels of God* hereafter; than he has *Reason* to *complain*, that he is not an Angel at *present*: Much less, when Man *had sinned*, when he was become an obnoxious Creature, could Reason support such extravagant Pretensions.

Though therefore our Saviour's Sufferings, as not internally altering the Sinner, could not give him a *Capacity* or *Relish* for Happiness; yet, they might give him what he wanted, when a Subject *capable*, a *Title* to eternal Bliss. Repentance must remove the *disqualifying* Circumstances, those Circumstances, that are a Bar to endless Felicity. But, *when* the disqualifying Circumstances are removed, then *eternal*

Life

Life is the Gift of God, through Jeſus Chriſt. *Repentance* in itſelf, conſidered *intrinſically*, cannot be ſo acceptable to God as *unſinning* Obedience: And therefore it wanted ſomething *extrinſic* to make it ſo: Our *Saviour performed* an *unſinning* Obedience, and it was placed to our Account.

But this brings me to the ſecond Scheme, which I promiſed to confute, the Efficacy of mere Repentance, without any Atonement.

And here a great many Queſtions may be aſked, which the Light of Nature cannot determine, *viz.* Whether Repentance, if it can atone for any, will atone only for *leſs* Crimes; or alſo for notorious Sins, long perſiſted in? If for the latter, whether it will be ſo far available as to procure a *total* Exemption from Puniſhment; or only to *ſoften* the *Rigour* of the Penalty? If it avails ſo far, as to procure a total Exemption, which can never be proved; whether it could likewiſe entitle to any *Happineſs?* And what that Happineſs would be? Whether an *unmixed eternal* Happineſs; or only a Happineſs of a *ſhort* Duration?

It were to be wiſhed, that thoſe who are ſo reſtleſs in their Endeavours to deſtroy

SERM. V. Chriſtianity, would let it alone, till they could propoſe, in lieu of it, ſome ſatisfactory Scheme for a wiſe Man to live and die by; ſome tolerable Hypotheſis to ſupport us under the Calamities of Life, and the Pangs of Death, ſo well calculated for our Comfort in this World, and our Happineſs in the next. But the Misfortune is, they *forſake the Fountain of living Waters, and hew out broken Ciſterns, which will hold no Water.* An authentic Promiſe of eternal Life, from him *who keepeth his Promiſe for ever,* is of infinitely more Value; than all the dry and jejune Speculations of Reaſon, abſtractedly from Revelation.

Will Repentance alone recover that Happineſs, which Mankind had forfeited; and reſcue them from that Miſery, to which they were become obnoxious? Do we not find, in the ordinary Courſe of Nature, which is God's Appointment, that Puniſhments, which no After-Conduct, no ſubſequent Reformation, can entirely remove, often attend upon Guilt *? A Man, for Inſtance, ſhall feel the ill Effects of De-

* See Biſhop *Butler*'s Analogy, Page 200.

bauchery,

bauchery, and a profligate Courſe of Life, long after he has repented and been reclaimed. Now, if we thus ſuffer for our Sins, notwithſtanding our Repentance in the daily Courſe of God's natural Providence, and his ſtated and uniform Methods of acting towards his Creatures here; what Grounds have we to imagine, that Repentance alone, without the Merits of our Saviour, will free us from all the ill Conſequences of Sin, in God's religious and moral Settlement of Things hereafter, in his final Adjuſtment of Rewards and Puniſhments? SERM. V.

It appears from the Cuſtom of Sacrificing, which prevailed every where; that, whoever maintains, that Repentance will expiate Guilt without any propiatory Sacrifice, cannot ſet up his Reaſon in oppoſition to *Revelation*, without ſetting it up in oppoſition to the *Common Senſe* and Reaſon of Mankind in all Ages and Nations. Some material Truths there were undoubtedly in the Pagan Religion; though they were adulterated with conſiderable and palpable Errors: Some Fire there was; though it was ſo involved in Smoke, that it could not yield a ſufficient Light. Whereas Truth ſhines forth in the Scriptures without any

SERM. V.

Alloy of Falſehood in its native Simplicity and genuine Brightneſs. It is there we have an authentic Account, that while all other Beings are indeed the Object of God's *Bounty*, Man is diſtinguiſhed from the reſt by being made the Object of his *Mercy*: Man alone is admitted to the glorious Privilege of being pardoned upon Repentance through the Merits of him, who took away Sin by the Sacrifice of himſelf.

That God will put the *repenting* Sinner upon a better Foot, than the *veteran unrelenting* Criminal, is indeed an evident Concluſion of *Reaſon*: But then it is as evident an one, that he will not put him upon the *ſame* Foot with the *Angels*, that *need no Repentance*.

For to put *Offenders*, without any Atonement, upon a Foot of *Equality* with the *Guiltleſs* and unoffending, would be to make no Diſtinction, where there was a very material Difference.

Here there are three Sorts of Beings in the Creation.——Beings, that *need no Repentance*——*Penitent* Sinners.——*Impenitent* Sinners. It will be allowed, that God may conſign the *laſt* to a State of *pure Miſery*, and the *firſt* to a State of *pure Happineſs*; and

and all the Difficulty will be, what God will do with the MIDDLE Set of Creatures, *viz. penitent* Sinners. To make them *as happy* as the *firſt*, would be as inconſiſtent with our Notions of Juſtice, as to make them *as miſerable* as the *laſt*. Here Reaſon ſeems to be either intirely at a ſtand; or, if it can prove any Thing, only to prove this; that Beings in whom there is a *Mixture* of *moral* Good and Evil, ſhall be conſigned to ſome State, in which there ſhall be a proportionable *Mixture* of *natural* Good and Evil. SERM. V.

Some late Authors, however, have been hardy enough to aſſert the Efficacy of mere Repentance; and to ſupport their Aſſertions, have argued after the following Manner, *viz.* Men, by a thorough Reformation, ceaſe to be perſonally diſpleaſing, and become perſonally pleaſing to God, and, conſequently, do not need any Thing that is perſonally pleaſing in another to make them ſo.

The Author ſeems to be deſcribing ſome viſionary ideal Beings, which may exiſt, perhaps, in his Imagination; but are in fact no where to be found in this World. For what is this Reformation, which removes whatever is diſpleaſing? Why, an abſo-

SERM. V.

abſolutely perfect Repentance, which can have no Place in ſuch imperfect Beings as we are. It is a mere *Notion*, not a *Reality*. Is our Repentance a Return to an *intire uninterrupted* Obedience, without any Alloy or Tincture of Vice? Or is it only to *ſuch* an Obedience, as is attended with ſeveral *Relapſes*; but by which, by degrees, and in the main, we gain *Ground* over our Vices: And, though far, very far, from being perfect, yet are in a progreſſive State towards Perfection?

But granting, there could be ſuch an abſolutely perfect Reformation; granting farther, what can never be proved, that ſuch a Reformation would remove God's Diſpleaſure: Yet does the Deity puniſh as frail and paſſionate Men do, merely becauſe he is *diſpleaſed* with, or diſapproves of, the Agent, without anſwering any beneficial and ſalutary Ends whatever? All *Diſpleaſure apart*, Governors, who conſult the Good of the Whole, may, and often do, inflict Puniſhments, to diſcountenance Vice, and ſupport the Cauſe of Virtue and Goodneſs. And he alone, who ſees paſt, preſent, and future, in one united Point of View, whoſe Foreknowledge looks through

every poſſible Conſequence, that can reſult from every Manner of acting towards penitent Sinners; can himſelf alone know, and reveal to us how he will deal with penitent Sinners, ſo as not to *counter-act* the *univerſal Good.*

It is farther urged, that the Deity muſt conſider us as Beings, not only liable, but alſo likely, to commit Sin; born with ſtrong Propenſions to Vice, and ſurrounded with numerous Temptations. And when we have done all that can be reaſonably expected from ſuch frail Creatures as we are, (that is, when we have done our beſt) then we are the proper Objects of God's Favour, without any Need of an Atonement, or propitiatory Sacrifice.

Here again, as uſual, the Authors conſider Mankind in Theory, and not in Fact: They conſider them, as what they *ſhould* and *ought* to be, ſerving God, to the utmoſt *Stretch* of their limited Powers, with the collected and united Force of every Faculty; and not as what they *really are*, often wilfully doing, what they ought not; and oftner omitting what they ought to do.

Whatever Allowances we may ſuppoſe a gracious God will make, for the Frailties of

SERM. V.

of our Nature; yet the *original* Weakneſſes which we bring with us into the World, are, in Proceſs of Time, ſo blended with our *acquired* Follies; that it being impoſſible to diſtinguiſh, in all Caſes, the one from the other, we cannot draw much ſolid Comfort from thence. Whatever we *are* at *preſent*, no Body can tell, what we *might have been*; if from firſt to laſt we had taken all poſſible Care, to weed out each riſing Folly, and to cheriſh the Growth of every Virtue: Even in thoſe Sins, which are called Sins of *Frailty*, and are, in ſome meaſure, ſuch; there is generally ſuch a Degree of *Wilfulneſs*, that, in ſome Caſes, it is no eaſy Matter to aſcertain, which is the predominant Ingredient in the Compoſition. A *ſuperficial* Inquirer may, no doubt, be highly pleaſed with himſelf. But the more *thoroughly* any Man examines himſelf, the more a Man conſiders how ſeldom, if ever, he fully acts up to thoſe Principles which he entertains, generally falling ſhort of them, and ſometimes acting contrary to them; the more he would be diſſatisfied with himſelf.

Is there a Man, who can lay his Hand upon his Heart, after having faithfully

examined it, and declare, that whatever Frailties he may have, yet he has ſtrove to the beſt of his Power, in every Stage of Life, to ſubdue each inordinate Paſſion, to diſcharge every Duty, and to cultivate each virtuous Habit? Let him ſtand forth at the laſt deciſive Day, and put in his Claim, (for an equitable Claim he perhaps may have) to ſuch a *Degree* of Happineſs, as will preponderate, or be ſuperior to any *ſhort-lived Miſery*, which he may have endured here, and be proportioned to his Deſerts. But *even he* could have no well-grounded Reaſon to expect, unleſs the Merits of our Saviour had enſured it to him, a Happineſs *unallayed* in its Nature, exceeding in its *Degree* whatever he could have imagined, and everlaſting in its *Duration.*

After all, ſuch a Being, as is deſcribed before, is, I am afraid, merely viſionary: Men of the moſt diſtinguiſhed Piety having Reaſon to pray, *Enter not into Judgment with thy Servant, O Lord: For in thy Sight ſhall no Man living be juſtified.*

Several indeed are too apt, in the Pride and *Bloom* of Life, to flatter themſelves into groundleſs *Preſumptions*, and a *ſanguine* Con-

Serm. V. Confidence. But when they come, juſt upon the Verge of another World, *coolly* and calmly to adjuſt Accounts between their Maker and themſelves; I doubt thoſe Sins, which, like *Shadows*, looked ſo *little* at the *Noon* of Life, will greatly *lengthen* with their *ſetting* Sun. Be that as it will; it is certain, that the Obſervation, *viz.* that none ever puſhed their Capicity, in Matters of Knowledge, as far as it was able to extend; holds as true in Matters of Morality: None ever exerted their Abilities as far as they were able to carry them, to the utmoſt Extent of their Capacity in the Purſuit and Practice of Virtue.

And yet *natural* Religion may require not only the *Being*, and *Reality* of each Virtue; but the utmoſt *Degree* of Virtue in our Power under the Penalty of future Puniſhment. Becauſe every Thing which we *have*, being derived *from* God; every Thing which we can *do*, is but our bounden Tribute *to* Him. Chriſtianity, on the other hand, requires indeed the Being and *Reality* of Virtue, under the Penalty of *Damnation*. But it requires the *utmoſt Degree*, and the higheſt Attainments, in Virtue, only under the Penalty of an *Abate-*

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ment or *Diſcount* of Happineſs. He that *has ſowed ſparingly*; according to that gracious Diſpenſation, ſhall reap proportionably, though in a leſs Degree; than he, that has ſowed bountifully. He, that has cultivated virtuous Habits, though in a lower Meaſure, ſhall be happy, though not equally with him, who has made much nearer Approaches to the Standard of Perfection.

So much Reaſon have we to be thankful to him, who has reſcued us from the *Puniſhment*; provided we ſtrive to reſcue ourſelves from the *Dominion* of Sin; in Confidence of whoſe all-ſufficient Merits, we may ſecurely launch out into the *Depths* of Eternity, as St. *Peter* ventured to *walk upon the Sea*, while we have a *Saviour* to lend an helping Hand, and to *ſupport us*, as he did *him*, from ſinking into the deep Abyſs below.

SER-

SERMON VI.

Preached at the

Lady *MOYER*'s LECTURE.

On the REDEMPTION.

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1 PETER III. 18.

Chriſt hath alſo once ſuffered for Sins, the Juſt for the Unjuſt, that he might bring us unto God.

HAVING, in a former Diſcourſe, ſhewn the Weakneſs and Inſufficiency of thoſe Schemes, which have been ſet up in oppoſition to Scripture; I now proceed to my SERM. VI.

II*d* general Head, to eſtabliſh and confirm the true Scripture Doctrine of the Satisfaction. After which

SERM. VI. I ſhall, in the laſt Place, conſider the Extent of the Redemption.

1*ſt*. I ſhall endeavour to eſtabliſh and confirm the true Scripture Doctrine of the Satisfaction.

And this I ſhall do,—by enquiring what Neceſſity there was for a Satisfaction—— by ſhewing—that our Saviour was the only proper Perſon to ſatisfy for our Sins, as he only could merit Forgiveneſs for them—— that his Merits might be imputed to us—— and our *Iniquities borne by him*;—and by removing Objections.

That there was a Neceſſity for a Satisfaction; appears very ſtrongly from Scripture Evidence, the only Evidence, which perhaps we are capable of, in Matters of ſo high a Nature. For unleſs there had been an abſolute Neceſſity, unleſs there had been a Knot too hard for any but the Deity to untie; a God indeed, *who was the Brightneſs of his Father's Glory, and the expreſs Image of his Perſon*, would not have deſcended upon the Scene of this World, to unravel the perplexing Difficulty. Certainly a Being of infinite Benevolence, would not have expoſed his only

only Son, *in whom he was well pleaſed*, to needleſs, as well as undeſerved Miſery.

Again: It is ſaid, it is *not poſſible that the Blood of Bulls and Goats*, which have no *inherent* Worth and Efficacy, *ſhould take away Sins*, or the Penalty of Sin, *Heb.* x. 4. Therefore it was neceſſary, that a Perſon of inconceivable Dignity, and ſuperior Excellency, ſhould ſatisfy the Demands of Juſtice, and procure for us the Endearments of divine Mercy. *Him hath God ſet forth to be a* Propitiation *for Sin, to declare his Righteouſneſs*, or to diſplay his Juſtice, *for the Remiſſion of Sins that are paſt; that he might be juſt, and the Juſtifier of them, that believe in Jeſus Chriſt.*

To reject a Satisfaction thus ſtrongly proved from Scripture, merely becauſe we do not perceive the abſolute Fitneſs and Neceſſity of it, by any Evidence from the *Nature* of the Thing; is intirely to ſet aſide the *Divine Authority*. For a Regard to the divine Authority, can only be ſhewn by aſſenting to Propoſitions *inevident* in *themſelves*, as having his Sanction, or being revealed by him. To Propoſitions *evident in themſelves* we ſhould have aſſented, whether revealed by him or not; nay, if they

SERM. VI.

had been discovered to us by the most *abandoned Sinner*, or notorious Liar. It is astonishing therefore to find Persons asserting, in express Words, that it is not the *Declaration of God, but the Fitness of the Thing declared, which is the proper Ground of our Assent*, i. e. they will not believe the *Deity affirming* a Proposition, unless they have such a clear and distinct *Perception* of the Fitness of the Thing affirmed; as must induce their Belief, whether the *Deity* had *affirmed* it, or *no*. *Modester* Men will be inclined to think, that all the Declarations of an infinitely wise Being imply a Fitness; a Fitness in the Nature of the Thing, but unperceived by us, whose Ideas do not reach the whole Compass and Extent of Fitnesses and Unfitnesses. A Man of *superior* Sense may discover a Fitness, that escaped the Observation of one of *less* Penetration: An *Angel* may discern a Fitness, which escapes a *Man* of the highest Reach of Thought: And the *Deity* must perceive an *Infinity* of Fitnesses, which are undiscoverable by the most exalted *Archangel*. And here I would observe, once for All, that most of the Objections, which I have met with against Scripture,

Scripture, proceed from hence; that Men ſet up for *Free-Thinkers*, in *Caſes* where they can be *but Half-Thinkers*, or even *leſs* than *that*. Particularly in this Caſe, we, who ſee but ſome ſcattered Links of the univerſal Chain, ſome disjointed Parts of the whole united Syſtem, cannot perceive, what is beſt and moſt fitting for the Good of the Whole; and therefore ought to acquieſce in *his* Declaration, who certainly *does*. Our Concluſion is but the Sum total of our Reaſoning; and as a Sum can never be juſtly caſt up, when any one Particular is omitted: So neither can the Sum total of our Reaſoning be juſt and exact, when any one intermediate Idea, which ought to be taken into the Account, is dropped or wanting. What may ſeem to us to have any Fitneſs, who view only ſome detached Branches of God's univerſal Kingdom; might appear very reaſonable, could we ſee through the whole Contexture of Things. Juſt as ſome looſe diſjointed Paſſages from Scripture, appear odd and unpromiſing by themſelves; and yet are very beautiful, and pertinent; the Thread, Connexion, and Dependency of one Thing on another, being conſidered.

Serm. VI.

Nothing can match the Ignorance and *Inſufficiency* of thoſe Perſons, except it be their great *Self-Sufficiency*, who vainly imagine, they have Compaſs of Thought enough, to graſp all that is neceſſary to a clear and determinate Reſolution of the Point in Debate. I have often thought, in how ridiculous a Light we muſt appear, to intelligent Beings of a ſuperior Rank, while we are thus meddling with Matters that are too high for us. A Set of Children, who ſhould form Schemes to govern *Europe*, to adjuſt the interfering Intereſts of contending Princes, and to direct their Sovereign in complicated Caſes, upon the moſt critical Emergencies; could not appear more abſurd to the ableſt Stateſmen; than we muſt do to them, when we ſit in Judgment upon God's Diſpenſations, ſcan the whole Plan of his Providence, and determine, what his infinite Wiſdom ought to do. No, let Angels and Archangels deſire to *look into*, and *contemplate* the *Nature* of our Redemption: Let Man be humbly content to *enjoy* the *Benefits* of it. When God ſhall unfold the whole Scheme of his Adminiſtration; when he ſhall lay, before the whole Syſtem of intelligent Be-

ings, the Harmony, Uniformity, and Conſiſtency of his Providence, from firſt to laſt; then we may expect greater Light into theſe Affairs. In the mean Time, it is enough for us to know; that *Scripture proves*, and Reaſon cannot *diſprove*, the Neceſſity of a Satisfaction.

2*dly*, Our Saviour was the only proper Perſon to ſatisfy for our Sins, as he alone could merit the Forgiveneſs of them.

Now *no created* Being could merit. Becauſe the higher Excellencies any Creature is ennobled with, the more he is indebted to the Giver of them; and his Services muſt be diſproportioned to the Favours he has received. For ſuch a Being to think, that any Thing *he* could do, could merit Forgiveneſs, and everlaſting Happineſs, for a World of Sinners, muſt have been the higheſt Preſumption, if God had *not* appointed him: But, if God *had* appointed him, it was ſo far from *Merit*, that it was his bounden *Duty*, in Return for the many unmerited Graces, which he had received. —— Our Saviour, who was *God* as well as Man, might merit. He could, out of his own *Fund*, diſcharge our *Debts*, or buy

SERM. VI.

us with a Price.—He had ſomething of his *own* to merit withal, which *no mere* Creature could have. He had *Power to take up his Life, and he had Power to lay it down.*

And though his Sufferings were the Sufferings of the *Man*; yet the *offering up* of his human Nature, was the Offering of the *God*, of the ſecond Perſon in the bleſſed Trinity. For as it is ſaid, *We are redeemed, not with corruptible Things, but with the precious Blood of Chriſt:* So it is ſaid, that he *by the eternal Spirit*; or, as it might be rendered, by *his* eternal Spirit, *offered himſelf up without Spot to God.* And in ſeveral other Paſſages, the Merit of his Sufferings is reſolved into the Dignity of that Nature, which ſtamped a Value upon them: *Who being the Brightneſs of his Glory, and the expreſs Image of his Perſon, and upholding all Things by the Word of his Power, purged,* or expiated, *our Sins. In whom we have Redemption through his Blood, even the Forgiveneſs of Sins: Who is the Image of the inviſible God,* &c. *Feed the Church of God, which he hath purchaſed with his own Blood.* And, though the God-head was impaſſive; yet the Perſon, who

who was God as well as Man, might ſuffer: Juſt as, though the Soul is unperiſhable; yet Man, who is compounded of Soul and Body, is mortal. SERM. VI.

Now, for the ſecond Perſon of the Trinity to offer up, what was *his own* independently, what was cloſely allied and *endeared* to him, by a *perſonal Union*, what derived a diſtinguiſhed Luſtre from him; to offer it up *unconſtrained*, muſt either conſtitute Merit, or we do not know what does.

As one Being enriched with Knowledge, and ennobled with Virtue, is far more valuable, than the whole Maſs of dead and inſenſate Matter: Thus one perfect Model of Virtue, without any Alloy of Vice, thus offered up by *God bleſſed for ever*, was of more Worth, than the whole World of ſinful Beings. And, whatever was deficient in the human Sacrifice, conſidered abſtractedly, and merely as human, might be ſupplied by the Merits, of the infinite Offerer ſuperadded to it, and placed to our Account. What thoſe Merits particularly were, we need not curiouſly inquire. A Man may know the Matter of Fact, that he is ranſomed from Captivity and Slavery by

by a generous Sovereign, without underſtanding *particularly, explicitly,* and fully, the *Kind, Manner,* and *Value* of the Ranſom, that was laid down, and the Price, with which he was purchaſed.

It is enough we are informed, that a *Divine Perſon* intereſted himſelf in the Affair: And when a God interpoſed, what he, an *infinite* Perſon, has done for us, cannot, in the Nature of Things, be *wholly,* and *adequately comprehended* by us: But what *we* have to do, in conſequence of his Tranſactions, for ourſelves, muſt be *clear* and *level* to our Capacities. Thus *God was in Chriſt, reconciling the World to himſelf.*

Having ſhewn, that there was a Neceſſity ſome Being ſhould merit for us, and that our Saviour was the only Being that could merit; I now proceed to ſhew, in what Senſe his Merits could be imputed to us, and our Iniquities laid upon him.

And it muſt be owned, that our Saviour's *good Actions* cannot be properly and ſtrictly *ours,* nor *our bad* Actions his: And in this Senſe, perſonal Merit and Demerit cannot be transferred. But the *Reward* of his good Actions, (I ſhall conſider the *Puniſhment*

of

of our Sins by and by) may, notwithſtanding, be made over to us, or conferred upon us: To exemplify this by a familiar Inſtance: A Perſon does his Country ſome eminent and ſignal Service, for which the moſt advantageous Poſts, and diſtinguiſhing Marks of Honour, are offered him: He declines them, as to his own Perſon; but deſires they may be beſtowed upon ſuch as have been faithful to him, and are qualified for them; and he ſhall look upon it as if done to himſelf.

Is there any Thing abſurd or ridiculous in ſuch a Conduct? Why might not then our bleſſed Saviour confer the Rewards of his meritorious Sufferings and Actions, as we may diſpenſe our Favours, on whom he thought proper? Why might he not do, what he would with his own, and place them to our Account; provided he did not *miſplace* them, upon unſuitable Objects, or proſtitute them to Beings habitually immoral?

Whatever Privileges our Saviour acquired, by that inimitable Original of Love and voluntary Condeſcenſion, were his: And what were *his*, he might *diſpoſe of* as his. For to *diſpoſe* of them as his, was only

SERM. VI. only to *uſe* them as his. *Father, I will that thoſe whom thou haſt given me, may be with me; that they may behold my Glory.* Here we muſt attend to the Diſtinction between Approbation and Kindneſs. The *Approbation* of an Action cannot be tranſferred, with Juſtice, from the Agent to another Perſon; yet the *Kindneſs* conſequent to that Approbation, may, and often is, with the conſent of the meritorious Perſon, thus transferred; becauſe in being kind to *others* at his Inſtance and Requeſt, we are, in the laſt Reſort, kind to *himſelf*: We reward *him in others.*

Thus *by the Obedience of one many became Righteous.* And *he, who knew no Sin, was made Sin,* or an Expiation for Sin, *that we might be the Righteouſneſs of God in him.* Thus he was *the Lord, our Righteouſneſs.* And we became the Heirs of God, for his Sake, and upon his Account, who had no Pretenſions to ſuch exalted Privileges upon our own.

So much may ſerve to prove, in what Senſe our Saviour's Merits were imputed to us. I now proceed to ſhew in what Senſe he could be ſaid to *bear our Iniquities.* And here it muſt be granted, that *perſonal*

Guilt

Guilt cannot be transferred; but the *legal* Guilt may, that is, the Obligation to Puniſhment, which reſults from the Violation of the Law. For God does not puniſh merely for Puniſhing's Sake: He does not inflict *uſeleſs* Miſery upon his Creatures: He does not puniſh, *merely* becauſe he *diſapproves* of, or is diſpleaſed with, Guilt; but becauſe of the *ill Conſequences* which would follow, if he ſuffered Guilt to go unpuniſhed: Becauſe it is neceſſary to vindicate the Honour of his Government, to ſupport his Authority as ſupreme Lawgiver, and to ſecure the Reſpect due to his Laws. Now if the Reverence due to God's Laws could be maintained, and all the wiſe and good Ends of Puniſhment anſwered by the Subſtitution of another Perſon (equal to the mighty Province) in the room of the Offender; then the Deity might accept of a Commutation, remit the Puniſhment to the Offender, and tranſfer it upon his Subſtitute. For when the *Reaſons* of inflicting a Penalty are taken off, there the *Penalty* itſelf undoubtedly may be taken off. The only Thing then that remains, is to prove, that our Saviour's Sufferings were ſufficient to ſecure the Honour

nour and Reſpect due to God's Laws. Now, whatever has a Tendency to impreſs upon our Mind, a moſt awful Senſe of God's Averſion to Sin, has a Tendency to preſerve a Reverence for God's Laws. And nothing could have imprinted upon our Minds, a more awful Senſe of God's Averſion to Sin, than that he would not forgive it, notwithſtanding our Repentance, upon leſs difficult Terms, than the Son of God's giving himſelf a Ranſom for this World: That he would not pardon the Breach of his Laws, without our Saviour's offering up what he had as great a Value for, as he had a Hatred and Deteſtation of the Offences committed againſt his Law.

We know not how far the State of this World might affect other intelligent Beings, in ſome other Part of the Creation, how far it might countenance a Rebellion, and give them diſadvantageous Ideas of their ſupreme Lawgiver; if a whole World of penitent Offenders, how long, how often, or how greatly ſoever, they have ſinned, might be admitted to everlaſting Glory, without any Sufferings perſonal or vicarious. They might imagine, that, what could be ſo eaſily pardoned, was not very

very offenſive to their Creator, nor would be deſtructive to themſelves. To obviate theſe ill Impreſſions, the Deity ſhewed he ſo hated Sin, *that he gave his only begotten Son*, rather than not *condemn Sin in the Fleſh*: He ſhewed, that when Man had ſinned, nothing that mere Man could do, was of Worth and Efficacy enough, to reinſtate him in his Favour. He laid a Plan of the Redemption ſo amazing, that Creatures of a Nature not ſo frail as ours, could have no Grounds to expect the like Favour, in caſe they revolted from their Allegiance to him; and ſo ſufficient, as to leave no Room, for material Exceptions againſt it, to thoſe enlightened Beings, who may ſee farther, than the mere Shell and Surface of it.

From what has been laid down, the Weakneſs of the following Objection diſcovers itſelf, *viz.* that *Sin cannot be puniſhed abſtractedly from the Sinner: Becauſe Sin abſtractedly from the Sinner, is a mere abſtract Notion.* For the ſupreme Legiſlator does not puniſh the Sinner for his Sins merely as ſuch, *abſtractedly* from the *ill* Conſequences which would ariſe from the *Impunity* of Sin. The formal Reaſon of

SERM. VI.

of Puniſhment is, the *evil Tendency* which Sin muſt have, if unpuniſhed. For, *all evil* Tendency *apart*, to puniſh would be to make the Being puniſhed miſerable, without a ſufficient Cauſe: Now, though *Sin*, as ſomething perſonal, *cannot* be *removed* from the Sinner; yet the *ill Conſequences* of Sin unpuniſhed *may be removed*, by a valuable Conſideration, fitted to obtain every End which could be propoſed from his perſonal Puniſhment, and offered and accepted in lieu of it. When there is *no* Reaſon *for* putting a Creature to Pain, when no deſirable End or Advantage can be compaſſed by it; there is always a Reaſon *againſt* doing it, *viz.* that it is a Pain, *unneceſſary* Pain. Some Writers, however, have aſſerted, that, notwithſtanding all the Ends of Government could be anſwered, and the general Happineſs ſecured, by the Interpoſition of another Perſon; yet ſuch a Procedure would be contrary to the *Truth* and *Right of the Caſe*. But what Truth would be violated? Not certainly *moral* Truth. For a Truth, which has *no* Reference to *Happineſs*, muſt be a Matter of *Indifference*; it muſt be a *ſpeculative* unconcerning Truth, and *there-*

fore not a *moral* Truth. If an Action, which was neither deſigned for, nor is productive of, *Benefit* or *Harm*, be, as it undoubtedly is, an *indifferent* Action; an Action which, in the Whole of its Effects, increaſes Happineſs and leſſens Miſery, (ſuppoſing a right Intention in the Agent,) muſt be *morally good*, in Proportion to the Moment of Good, which it produces; and therefore ſuch a Procedure, as was calculated for the general Good, without any Injury done, as I ſhall prove immediately, to the mediating Party, muſt be morally good. SERM. VI.

It may be objected, that in the Subject, in which the Fault is, in that ſame Subject ſhould the Puniſhment be; and that it is a flagrant Injuſtice, to puniſh an innocent Perſon inſtead of the Guilty.

And, it is granted, that it is Injuſtice to puniſh a Perſon, merely *becauſe* he is innocent: But it is not ſo, *notwithſtanding* he is innocent, when he deliberately *chuſes* to undergo the Puniſhment; when he has an unconteſted *Right* to diſpoſe of himſelf, and when *great* and important *Ends* are anſwered by it. There can be *no Injuſtice*, where there is no *Invaſion* of any *Property*;

SERM. VI.

and there could be no *Invaſion* of any *Property*; when our Saviour, by a *free, generous, unconſtrained* Act reſigned, what he had an undiſputed Right to lay down, his own Life. Nor is it any Impeachment of God's Goodneſs to let an Evil of *Suffering* take place, an Evil, which was productive of an *univerſal prepollent* Good. It could be no Injury to our Saviour, for another Reaſon, *viz.* that he received an ample Recompence for the Hardſhips, which he ſuſtained in his human Nature, by diſtinguiſhed Rewards, and an Acceſſion of Glory to it. The Arguments, which are brought to prove, that he, who was no Sinner, ought not to have been a Sufferer *for us*, prove as ſtrongly, at leaſt, that he ought to have been *no Sufferer at all*. For he no more deſerved thoſe Sufferings on his *own* Account, than he did on *ours*. And yet we ſee innocent Perſons; Children, for Inſtance; who are capable of no actual Guilt, ſuffer daily. And if they may ſuffer for *no* aſſignable *End*, which we can comprehend; why might not our Saviour ſuffer for ſo *valuable an End*, as to avert Miſery from, and procure an endleſs Felicity for, all penitent Sinners? Nor is it any more

more an Abſurdity, that God ſhould permit a guiltleſs Perſon, to part with that, which he has a Right to diſpoſe of, to ſave a whole World from Ruin; than that he ſhould command an innocent Perſon, to give away ſome Part of his Poſſeſſions and Property, to reſcue a Family, that has involved itſelf, from Ruin. In both Caſes the *Innocent* ſuffer for the *Guilty*; and part with what is dear and valuable to them, to promote, what is more dear and valuable; the Good of their Fellow-creatures. Had Men as full a Power lodged in them, to diſpoſe of their Lives, as they have, confeſſedly, of their Money, for the Benefit of Mankind; ſuch Acts would indeed be Injuſtice, when *impoſed* upon them: But, when they proceeded from their own *Choice* and free Conſent, they would be Inſtances of heroic Goodneſs.

It has been repreſented as a ſtrange Expedient to deter Beings from Sin, or to ſhew Diſpleaſure againſt it; that an innocent Perſon ſhould ſuffer inſtead of the Sinner: To inſiſt upon this, we are told, is *obſtinately to perſiſt in Error, without the leaſt Face of an Argument.* To which I anſwer: That there is an Obſtinacy in

SERM. VI.

Error ſome where or other: But where it lies, will appear, by and by, by laying open the Chicanery of this Objection: Which is as follows. The Objectors conſider our Saviour *abſtractedly*, as to his own Nature; without conſidering him in his *relative* Capacity, as to the Office he undertook. Whatever Right he had to be treated as an innocent Perſon, *antecedently* to his offering himſelf as a Ranſom; yet, *when* he had offered himſelf as a Subſtitute, he voluntarily waved and relinquiſhed that Right: And therefore might be treated, not according to that Right which he had foregone, or made a Ceſſion of; but according to that Capacity which he had aſſumed. Now to apply what is here laid down, in order to unravel this Piece of Sophiſtry: They very artfully drop the *Idea* of *Subſtitute*, retaining only that of an *innocent* Perſon: They take into the Account his *Nature*, omitting his *Office*: And thus, ſuppreſſing a *material Part* of the Truth, they confound unattentive Readers, (which the Bulk of Readers ever will be) with this ſpecious Fallacy, *viz.* To puniſh an innocent Perſon, as our Saviour was, inſtead of the Guilty, is ſo far from being a Teſtimony

mony of Diſpleaſure againſt Sin; that it is the Reverſe. And it would be ſo, to puniſh him *merely as ſuch*, in that *ſingle abſtract* View, without any *Relation* to the *Character* which he ſuſtained: But to puniſh him as one who gave up his Right to be treated as innocent; who voluntarily offered himſelf, as a Subſtitute for an offending World, is certainly an Indication of the divine Diſpleaſure againſt Sin: Becauſe, *unleſs* God had been ſo far diſpleaſed at Sin, as not to readmit even penitent Sinners, merely as ſuch, to Favour; he had required *no Subſtitute*, no vicarious Puniſhment at all. God's Averſion to Sin, upon the account of its Malignity and prejudicial Nature, is ſhewn, in proportion to the Difficulty of pardoning it; and the Difficulty of pardoning it, in proportion to the Dignity of the Perſon, who ſuffered. SERM. VI.

It is objected, that ſuch a Satisfaction muſt be inconſiſtent with God's free Grace: Becauſe, if it was a juſt and reaſonable Satisfaction; God could not have refuſed it: But if not juſt and reaſonable; then he ought not to have accepted it.

To which I anſwer, that this is a groſs and palpable Fallacy: It *ſuppoſes* the very

SERM. VI.

Thing, which ought to have been proved, or rather admits of *no Proof.*

It ſuppoſes, that a Satisfaction may be juſt and reaſonable, *antecedently* to the Will of the Legiſlator: Whereas, in all vicarious Puniſhments, the Legiſlator's Conſent muſt be *preſuppoſed*, as abſolutely neceſſary to make them juſt and reaſonable: Which Conſent he may withhold; and inſiſt, that, the Crime being ours, the Puniſhment ſhould be ſo too.

Beſides, when it is ſaid, that the *Satisfaction* was *reaſonable*, it may be aſked, Reaſonable, as *to what?* It was reaſonable in *this* Reſpect, that it was an Expedient to ſecure the Honour of God's Laws, and to prevent the ill Conſequences of the Indemnity of Sin, though repented of: But it might have been *as* reaſonable, at leaſt, and would have anſwered the ſame End, if Sinners had ſuffered in *Perſon*. Therefore this Objection proceeds, *a dicto ſecundum quid, ad dictum ſimpliciter*, from what is reaſonable in *one* View, to what is ſo *intirely*, and in *all* Views, without any poſſible Alternative, which might be *as* reaſonable.

If it be objected; that the ſecond Perſon in the Trinity could not ſatisfy the firſt;

first; becauſe they are of one undivided Eſſence. SERM. VI.

I reply, That the whole Force of this Objection, reſts upon our Notions of the Divine Unity, which are too inadequate to reaſon ſolidly upon. Thoſe, who advance this Objection, ſhould prove, either that the Union muſt be too cloſe to admit of diſtinct Actions and Offices; or too wide to make the three Perſons one God. The Manner of the divine Unity is as unſearchable, as his Eſſence; and our Ideas of it too indeterminate and indiſtinct, to beget any full and determinate Knowledge, which muſt always keep Pace with our Ideas. The three Perſons are one Being, becauſe *undivided:* But it does not follow, that becauſe they are undivided; that therefore they are *indiſtinct:* To be undivided, and to be indiſtinct, being not the ſame Idea. *Whither ſhall I go,* ſays the Pſalmiſt, *from thy Preſence? If I go up into Heaven, thou art there: If I go down to Hell, thou art there alſo: If I take the Wings of the Morning, and remain in the uttermoſt Parts of the Sea; even there alſo ſhall thy Hand lead me, and thy right Hand ſhall hold me.* Now Being in Heaven, Being in Hell,

SERM. VI.

Being in the Sea, may be one Being, becauſe undivided; but not, becauſe indiſtinct: For certainly Being in Heaven is diſtinct from Being in Hell. The Unity then of the three Perſons, as to their Nature, reſults from their Indiviſibility.—— Indiviſibility is no Bar to Diſtinction.—— What is no Bar to Diſtinction, can be none to diſtinct Actions or Offices.—— Conſequently, Son and Father, though indiviſible, and therefore one Being, might act diſtinctly, in giving and receiving Satisfaction.

Still it may be urged; that this does not intirely remove the Difficulty: That, however diſtinct, they are one and the ſame Lawgiver: And conſequently, the ſame Lawgiver ſatisfied the ſame Lawgiver: Which is an Abſurdity.

To take off the Force of this Objection, it is ſufficient to obſerve: That to be ſovereign Lawgiver is no *eſſential* Perfection of the Deity. If it were, he could never have been without it: He muſt have been Lawgiver *ab æterno*; i. e. He muſt have been Lawgiver, before there were any Beings to give Laws to. It is plain then, to be Lawgiver is only a *relative* Property. Our Saviour conſequently might be truly God,

God, *i. e.* ennobled with all the *eſſential* Perfections of God; at the ſame Time that he diveſted himſelf of the *relative* Capacity of ſovereign Lawgiver, during the Time, that he was tranſacting the gracious Scheme of our Redemption. It is true, it is neceſſary, that God ſhould be Lawgiver to us, *ſtante rerum Hypotheſi:* But then, upon the Suppoſition of more Perſons in the divine Nature, it is no more neceſſary, that the Son ſhould be always ſupreme *Lawgiver*; than that the Father ſhould be *Judge* at the laſt Day. The ſame Attributes are *inherently* veſted in both: But the *Exertion* of thoſe Attributes, in *this* or *that Province*, in this or that *particular* Scheme of Action, is free and voluntary.

There is a *Point* in Knowledge, where *Uſefulneſs* ends, and *unconcerning Speculation* begins. *As far* as any Thing is *uſeful* and important to our Happineſs, ſo far, by the Help of Revelation, all is generally clear and plain; *beyond* that, all is dark and inacceſſible to us in a great meaſure. The Reaſon is, God has drawn a Veil over this Part of Knowledge, leſt by attending to Things *remote* from *Uſe*, and Matters of mere *Curioſity*, the Mind ſhould be diverted

Serm. VI. ed from useful and *practical* Inquiries. The Circle of our Knowledge, as far as it conduces to Happiness, though not very large, is, by the Help of Scripture, exact and full. To exemplify this, in the Point of the Redemption, some Persons complain of a Darkness spread over the Face of this Dispensation. But as to *what?* As far as it is a Doctrine of *Use* and *Importance*, so far it is clearly and distinctly revealed. We are expressly told, what our Saviour has purchased for us, and what we have to do, to qualify ourselves for the Happiness which he has purchased. It is discovered to us, that God, through his Merits, will confer upon every penitent Offender that exceeding and eternal Weight of Bliss, which even the Unoffending could have had no Title to. *So far* it is a Doctrine of solid Use and Importance.

But we want, perhaps, more fully to understand the *internal Manner*, and *particular* Efficacy of his Merits and Intercession, and the *Whole* of the Transaction between the Father and the Son, in the stupendous Work of our Salvation. Here *mere Curiosity* commences; and therefore no Wonder, our *Knowledge* should in a great

great meaſure *end*. Theſe are the Things which Angels deſire to look into; and we, *till* we are Angels, ſhould not expect a full and comprehenſive Satisfaction about. SERM. VI.

Let us compare Creation and Redemption. From the former we derive our *Being*, from the latter our *eternal* Well-being. *Both* Truths are involved in great *Difficulties*: Both are either, *for* that Reaſon, to be rejected; or (which is the much better Concluſion,) both, *notwithſtanding* that Reaſon, to be admitted.

I ſhall now, in the laſt Place, conſider the Extent of the Redemption.

Our Saviour laid down his Life for the Sins of the whole World. He came, that *as in Adam all die, ſo in Chriſt ſhould all be made alive. As by one Man's Diſobedience many (the Many*, or Mankind in general) *were made Sinners*, treated as ſuch, and made ſubject to Death, *the Wages of Sin*; ſo, *by the Obedience of one, ſhall many be made righteous. Clemens Romanus*, an Apoſtolical Father, expreſsly declares, that *the Blood of Jeſus was ſo precious in God's Sight, as to obtain the Privilege of Repentance for all the World, in all paſt Ages*;

SERM. VI. *Ages*; and that *the Ninevites repenting, upon the Preaching of Jonas, were ſaved by it, though Aliens from God* *.

From hence we may conclude, that, though thoſe, who have performed the Conditions of the Goſpel-Covenant, Faith and penitential Obedience, ſhall ſhine out with diſtinguiſhed Glory; yet the Benefits of his Paſſion ſhall be applied, in ſome meaſure, even to thoſe, who never heard of his Name. The Sphere of his Beneficence extended backwards to the Foundation of the World, and reaches forward to the laſt Conflagration; ſo that Nothing, which is capable of being ſaved, is *hid from the Heat thereof*. He became the Saviour of all Ages, from the firſt Birth of Time to its laſt Period; the Father of Mankind, from the Riſing up of the Sun, to the Going down of the ſame. The Bleſſings of his Coming into the World, are as extenſive as the World, and as laſting as Eternity.

View leiſurely the ſtupendous Scheme—a whole World *redeemed* from *Miſery*——a whole World made *happy*, if their own Impenitence doth not prevent it——made

* Clemens Romanus, Epiſt. I. cap. 7.

ever-

everlaſtingly happy :—And tell me, what Sentiments it ought to inſpire you with—Why, Sentiments of Gratitude too *big* to be *uttered*, too *fervent* to be *concealed*. SERM. VI.

We think no Language too harſh, no Uſage too ſevere, to thoſe, who can be guilty of a baſe Ingratitude, to a generous *Friend*, *Parent*, or *Father* of his Country. But what are the moſt diſtinguiſhing Benefits, which a Father of his Country, a Parent, a Friend, can heap upon us, in compariſon of what our *Saviour* has done for us? Lighter than Vanity, and Nothing, when weighed in the Balance with an exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory, the greateſt Bleſſing that *Man* could receive, or even *God* beſtow.

Behold, with the Eye of Faith, a Spectacle worthy to be beheld by God with Pleaſure, and by Angels with Wonder and Aſtoniſhment: A Spectacle ridiculous in the Eyes of thoſe, who are too *dull* to diſcern the *Saviour* through the *Sufferer*; but in the Eye of thoſe *ennobled* Beings, who ſee Things *as they are* in *themſelves*, and not as they are ſet off by *Pomp*, a Spectacle more auguſt and awfully glorious, than ever before appeared on the Theatre of Nature.

Behold

Behold the Son of God pouring forth his Blood, as well as Prayers, even for thoſe, that ſhed it: Behold him at once bearing the Inſults, expiating the Sins, and procuring the Happineſs of Mankind; till at laſt he bows his ſacred Head, and ſhuts up the ſolemn Scene with theſe ſhort but comprehenſive Words, IT IS FINISHED: The great, the ſtupendous Work is done, the univerſal Sacrifice, which ſhall take in all Mankind, and which all Mankind ſhall contemplate throughout Eternity with awful Joy and Gratitude, is completed.

And can we receive theſe aſtoniſhing Endearments, this prodigious Expence of Goodneſs, which, like the bleſſed Effects that we are to receive from it, is ſuch as *Eye had not ſeen* before, *nor Ear heard, nor had it entred into the Heart of Man to conceive*: Can we receive it, I ſay, with a dull Inſenſibility, and a ſtupid Indifference?

If we find ourſelves affected with endearing Sentiments of Love, towards virtuous Characters, which we read of in ancient Hiſtory: If, when their Story is repreſented on the Stage, we feel our Hearts

Hearts intereſted in their Favour: If we honour and eſteem them, from whom we reap no Advantage: How much more ought we to love, eſteem, and honour him, the Benefit of whoſe Actions and Sufferings reaches to all Ages, all Nations, all Mankind? What are they (the great Heroes of Antiquity) to us, or we to them; who might be an Honour to the Age in which they lived, but are of no Service to us; like Stars at an immenſe Diſtance, the Light of which may fill their own Sphere, but reaches not down to this lower World? But our Saviour was a Perſon born for the whole World, for which he died, a Bleſſing to all Mankind from the *Beginning of Time*, and whom all Mankind will have Reaſon to bleſs, when *Time ſhall be no more*.

But let us remember, that there were two Ends of our Saviour's Coming into the World; the one to be a complete *Pattern* of *Goodneſs* in his Life; and the other to be a full *Satisfaction* for *Sin* by his Death. In vain we expect to be ſaved by his *Death*, as a full Satisfaction for Sin; unleſs we endeavour to copy after his *Life*,

as

SERM. VI. as a complete Pattern of Goodneſs. He came, not to make our Repentance needleſs, but to make it valid and effectual. *Ye are not your own,* ſays St. *Paul*; *for ye are bought with a Price. Therefore glorify God in your Body, and in your Spirit, which are God's.*

SERMON

SERMON VII.

Preached at the

Lady *MOYER*'s LECTURE.

On the Doctrine of the TRINITY.

MATTHEW XXVIII. 19.

Go ye therefore, and teach all Nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt.

THE Text ſets before us the ſolemn Commiſſion, which our Saviour gave to the Apoſtles, by which they were to baptize all Nations into the Belief and Worſhip of the Holy Trinity. SERM. VII.

Though ſome have treated this Doctrine as a mere notional barren Thing; yet, that our *Saviour* is God, and the *Holy Ghoſt*

SERM. VII. God, is no more a *ſpeculative* Point; than this Propoſition, viz. *there is a God*, is *ſo*. Both Propoſitions are the Foundations of ſeveral Duties, which are the neceſſary Parts of a good Life. The Worſhip of our Saviour as God, our Gratitude and religious Homage to him, as ſuch, are practical Points, as much as any Offices of Morality whatever. The Knowledge of our Duty equally obliges us to the Performance of it; through whatever Channel it is conveyed, whether by the Light of Nature, or that of Revelation. And from the Time, that the Scriptures had diſcovered to us the Nature and reſpective Offices of our Redeemer and Sanctifier; we were as much obliged to adore Them, as to adore the Father. And if a wilful Neglect of behaving ſuitably to thoſe Relations, which we bear to the Father and our Fellow-creatures, makes us the proper Objects of Puniſhment; then a flagrant Neglect of acting ſuitably to thoſe Relations, which we bear to the Son and Holy Ghoſt, muſt likewiſe expoſe us to the divine Diſpleaſure *. In

* See this Point ſet in a beautiful Light by one of the fineſt Thinkers of the Age in his *Analogy of natural and revealed Religion.* Page 151, &c.

ſhort we do not live a good Life, unleſs we treat Beings, as what they are in themſelves, and according to what they have done for us. The Man, who does not, as far as in him lies, conſider the Dignity of the Perſon of his Benefactor, nor the Greatneſs of the Benefits received from Him, is an immoral Man. *His Life is wrong*, and therefore *his Faith cannot be right*. SERM. VII.

To return to my Text, from which I have digreſſed, "Whatever Perſons" (as a conſiderable Writer expreſſeth it) "are "named in conjunction with God the Fa- "ther in ſuch an authoritative Manner, as "to give a Commiſſion, upon the Execu- "tion of which the Remiſſion of Sins and "eternal Salvation depends, or in ſuch a "Manner, as ſuppoſes Men to be *conſe- "crated* and *dedicated* to thoſe Perſons; they "all muſt be God." I ſhall, therefore,

I*ſt*, Endeavour to prove from *Scripture*, that there are more Perſons than One in the divine Nature.

II*dly*, I ſhall anſwer the Objections againſt this Doctrine from the *Nature* of the Thing.

SERM. VII.

I*ſt*, I ſhall endeavour to prove from *Scripture*, that there are more Perſons than One in the divine Nature.

I ſhall lay the main Streſs upon the Divinity of our *Saviour*: Becauſe, if *that* is made good, there can be no reaſonable Objection againſt the Divinity of the *Holy Ghoſt*; eſpecially ſince he is ſaid to *ſearch all Things, yea, the deep Things of God*, and to *know the Things of God*, (which no mere Creature can do,) as intimately as *the Spirit of a Man knoweth* his own Thoughts. 1 Cor. ii. 10, 11.

In the 1*ſt* Place, the Scripture every where aſſerts, that God alone is to be worſhipped; the ſame Scripture declares, that our Bleſſed Saviour is to be worſhipped: The obvious Conſequence of which is, our Saviour is God. Thus St. *Stephen* adores him with direct Worſhip: *Lord Jeſus, receive my Spirit*: A Petition of the ſame Force and Energy with that, which our Saviour offered up to the Father on the Croſs: *Father, into thy Hands I commend my Spirit*. And again: To him *is aſcribed Glory and Praiſe and Dominion* (after his Mediatorial Kingdom, which ſome have made

made the Foundation of his Worſhip, ſhall ceaſe) even *for ever and ever*. And the Subtleties, by which the *Arians* would evade the Force of theſe Texts, only prove, that a Man of *plain* Underſtanding, but of an honeſt Heart, is leſs liable to err; than a Philoſopher of much deeper Penetration, who has an *Attachment* to ſome favourite *Scheme*. For the Former, who does *not lean to his own Underſtanding*, reſts in the moſt *obvious* and *natural* Conſtruction of the Words of Scripture. Whereas the Latter is fond of *Refinements*, and will invent a thouſand Devices to confute (what will ever be too hard for Him) *common Senſe*. SERM. VII.

The *Heart*, when it is biaſſed to any Darling Notion, will always get the better of the *Head*, how *good ſoever* it be. Therefore the firſt Rule ſhould be even in the Search of ſaving *Knowledge*: *Keep* your *Heart with all Diligence*.

Thus the *Arians* own, that the Son is to be worſhipped; but aſſert, that the Worſhip ought to terminate in the laſt Reſort in the Father. To which I anſwer, that this Worſhip, which is paid to Chriſt, but, according to their Scheme, ought to terminate in the Father, is (to uſe their own

SERM. VII. Diſtinction, a Diſtinction which no where occurs in Scripture,) either ſupreme or inferior Worſhip. If the Former, then it ought not to be paid at all to the Son, provided he is an inferior Being. The ſupreme Worſhip is a Tribute due only to the ſupreme God: It would be Sacrilege to give the higheſt Honour to any, who is not the higheſt in the Scale of Beings: But if the Worſhip offered to Chriſt is only an inferior Worſhip, then it is unworthy of the ſupreme Object, and conſequently ought not to terminate in him, who would be diſhonoured thereby. Beſides: How can inferior Worſhip terminate in Him, who has forbidden all Creature-Worſhip? It is a flagrant Crime to ſerve the *Creature beſides the Creator*, and to worſhip *Thoſe who by Nature are no Gods*. Either then our Saviour is God by Nature; or he is not to be worſhipped. St. *John*, Rev. v. 13. tells us expreſly, that he *heard* in a prophetical Viſion *every Creature in Heaven, and Earth, and under the Earth, ſaying, Bleſſing, and Honour, and Glory, and Power be unto Him that ſitteth upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.* You ſee here the ſame Honour and Adoration is jointly paid to both Father and

and Son without any Diſtinction or Diſpro- SERM. VII.
portion of Reſpect, which the Father would not have ſuffered, if there had been an infinite Diſproportion between them; the one being the ſupreme God, the other a Creature.

But farther: Whatever unſcriptural Diſtinctions ſome may make of ſupreme and ſubordinate Worſhip; yet he, who at the ſame Time that he dwelleth in Heaven, to make Interceſſion for us, can be preſent upon Earth, to know the Variety of Petitions, mental as well as vocal, private as well as public, which are put up by ſeveral Millions of People in different and widely-diſtant parts of the Earth in one and the ſame Moment of Time, and can be able to redreſs their Grievances, muſt be God in the *higheſt* Senſe of the Word. For it is the Deity alone, that can command ſuch an unbounded Proſpect, and take in the whole Compaſs of Nature. Either then all Prayer muſt be direct to a Being who *ſeeth in Secret*, who hath a free and unreſtrained Admittance to the hidden Reſources of the Heart, who is God *abſolutely*——— Or we may be obliged to addreſs ourſelves in Prayer to a Perſon, who is not intimately

SERM. VII.

preſent to whatever is tranſacted within the Breaſt, who cannot diſcern the internal and affectionate Application of the Mind to him, in ſhort, too ignorant to know, too impotent to relieve our Wants. But as this is highly abſurd; it follows, that to whomſoever we are obliged to prefer our Petitions, he muſt be the *Searcher of Hearts*, conſequently our Saviour is ſo, and therefore God. Can a Creature, *where two or three* throughout the World, *are gathered together in his Name, be in the midſt of them?* Matth. xviii. 20. Can a Creature be a kind of univerſal Soul to the whole Chriſtian World, and *if any Man love him*, come together with the Father, and *make his Abode with him?* John xiv. 23.

2*dly*, It is ſaid, that *he, that built all Things, is God:* But it is affirmed, that *all Things were made by the Word*, viz. our Saviour, *and without him was not any Thing made, that was made.* St. *John* i. 3. From hence we may infer, that Chriſt, as Creator, is God, rejecting the ſenſeleſs Notion of a *Creature-Creator*. In anſwer to this, the *Arians* mutter ſomething very dark and obſcure about the Prepoſitions *By* and *Through* (*By* or *Through whom God made*

the

the World) intimating, what they care not to ſpeak out, that our Saviour was a mere Inſtrument in the Work of the Creation, but forgetting, that the very ſame Prepoſition is likewiſe applied to the Father, *Through whom are all Things*; forgetting likewiſe, that not only all Things were created BY him, but alſo FOR *him*; *and by him they do conſiſt.* Coloſſ. i. 16, 17. And Things are not made *for* the ſake of the *Inſtrument* by him, *who made all Things for Himſelf.* Prov. xvi. 4. And again, *Thou, Lord,* (not *another, through* him) Thou, Lord, *haſt laid the Foundation of the Earth, and the Heavens are the Work of thy Hand. They ſhall periſh, but thou ſhalt endure. They all ſhall wax old, as doth a Garment; but thou art the ſame, and thy Years ſhall not fail.* Heb. i. 10, 11, 12. He is expreſsly ſtiled *the Beginning and the End.* Rev. xxii. 13. *The Beginning,* that is, the efficient Cauſe, *from* which all Things *proceed*; and *the End,* that is, the final Cauſe, *to* which all Things *are referred*; and nothing higher can be ſaid of God the Father. SERM. VII.

Add to this, that he is called *God over all bleſſed for ever.* Romans ix. 5. *The*

firſt

SERM. VII.

firſt and laſt, Alpha and Omega, which was, and is, and is to come, the Almighty. Rev. i. 8, 17, 18. The *mighty*, the *true*, *the great God: King of Kings, and Lord of Lords; in whom all the Fulneſs of the Godhead dwelleth ſubſtantially: All Things are naked and open to him: Upholding all Things by the Word of his Power.*

If it be ſaid that the Word, God, is a *relative* Term, and that our Saviour is ſtiled God in reſpect of his *Office* and the *Relation* he bears to us, but not in reſpect of his *Nature*; I anſwer; he is ſtiled God, before any Thing was made by him. *In the Beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All Things were made by him,* &c. St. *John* i. 1, 3. Now, as he could have *no Relation* to his Creatures *before* they were made, nor any *Office* or *Authority* over them, he muſt be God *abſolutely*, not relatively, God by *Nature*, and not by virtue of his *Office* or *Authority*. But, ſuppoſing the Word *God* to be *relative*; the Term *Jehovah*, which is often applied to the Son, is of *abſolute* Signification, and implies unchangeable, neceſſary, independent Exiſtence, the incommunicable Property of the ſupreme Deity,

Deity, *whoſe Name only is Jehovah.* Thus St. *John* ſaith, xix. 37. *Another Scripture ſaith, they ſhall look on him, whom they have pierced.* The Scripture is *Zechariah* xii. 10. where God is introduced ſpeaking: *They ſhall look on me,* viz. Jehovah, as appears from what goes before, *whom they have pierced.* And again, *Theſe Things ſaid Iſaiah when he ſaw* our Saviour's *Glory, and ſpake of him.* St. *John* xii. 41. Turn to *Iſaiah,* and you find it: *I ſaw the Lord* (Jehovah) *ſitting upon his Throne.——Above it ſtood the Seraphims—and one cried unto another and ſaid: Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of Hoſts. The whole Earth is full of his Glory. Iſaiah* vi. 1, 2, 3. It would be endleſs to cite all the Paſſages, in which the Name of Jehovah is given to our bleſſed Saviour. SERM. VII.

The Man, who is obſtinate in the Diſbelief of his Saviour's Godhead, muſt be, one would think, ſtrongly tempted to reject the Scriptures, as a Book big with *Blaſphemy*; ſince *every* Idea *diſtinctive* of God from his Creatures is there aſcribed to him; unleſs *Paternity,* a mere Relation of Order, be the *diſtinctive* Idea of God; which is ſo far from implying any *Inferiority,* that it

SERM. VII. it proves the very *Reverſe*. For unleſs *only Son*, and *only begotten*, ſignify the *only created*, (the Conſequence of which would be, that our Saviour is the *only Creature* in the World;) it muſt follow, that he is *uncreated*, and therefore of the *ſame Nature* with his Father.

To ſay, that when creative and providential Powers are aſcribed to the Son, theſe are the Attributes and Powers of the Father communicated *to*, exerciſed *in*, and manifeſted *by* the Son, is to get rid of a Difficulty at the Expence of an Abſurdity.

For how can there be a Communication of the eſſential Properties of the Deity without a Communication of the divine Eſſence.

Whatever Attributes are communicated, muſt be proportioned to the Capacity of the Receiver. And if the Son be not infinite; what is finite, cannot be ſuſceptive of infinite Attributes.

There is one material Flaw in the *Arian* Scheme, which muſt endanger the whole Fabrick, *viz.* that they have made two Gods, a God ſupreme, and a God inferior, in direct Oppoſition to the firſt Commandment, *Thou ſhalt have no other Gods, but me*;

no other *Elohim*, a Word, as the Learned know, expreſſive not only of ſupreme, but alſo of inferior Gods: The plain Senſe of the Commandment therefore is this: *Thou ſhalt have no other Gods*, whether ſupreme or inferior, but the one *Jehovah*. That can never be true and genuine Chriſtianity, upon the Principles of which it is impoſſible to confute any rational unprejudiced *Jew*: But upon the Principles of *Arianiſm* it is impoſſible to convince any rational *Jew*. For the obvious Reply would be, that Religion muſt be falſe, which expreſsly contradicts the firſt Commandment: The *Arian* Scheme does ſo by ſetting up two Gods, the one Supreme, the other Inferior: And therefore muſt be falſe. If the *Arians* ſhould reply, that they have no other adorable God but him, *whom the ſupreme God*, as they expreſs it, *hath appointed to be worſhipped*; a *Jew* would reply, that God hath made the Commandment *unalterable* and irreverſible. No Credentials, no *Miracles*, can prove, that the ſupreme Being hath *appointed* any *inferior* God to be *worſhipped*; becauſe he hath entred his Caveat againſt admitting *Miracles* to be a *Proof* of his allowing any inferior God to be adored.

SERM. VII.

adored. He expreſsly ſaith, *If there ariſe among you a Prophet or a Dreamer of Dreams, and give thee a Sign or Wonder, and the Sign or Wonder come to paſs, whereof he ſpake unto Thee, ſaying,* LET US GO AFTER OTHER GODS, *which thou haſt not known* AND SERVE THEM; *Thou ſhalt not hearken,* &c. *Deut.* xiii. 1, 2, 3.

I ſhall beg leave to propoſe ſome Queries to thoſe who are of a different Way of Thinking, which are as follow:

Whether in thoſe Points, which have an immediate Connexion with Practice, and which relate to the great and fundamental Article of the Object of Worſhip, the Chriſtian Religion, being intended for the Uſe of Mankind in *general*, muſt not be ſuited to that *common Senſe* and Reaſon, which Mankind in *general* have, as *diſtinct* from *ſuperior*, *exalted* and refined Senſe, the diſtinguiſhing Perfection of a *few* only?

Whether, ſuppoſing *Arianiſm* to be true, *common Senſe*, as diſtinct from *metaphyſical* Subtleties, would enable the Generality of Mankind to diſtinguiſh between a Perſon, ſuch as our Saviour is, *by whom all Things were created, and who upholdeth all Things by the*

the Word of his Power; and a Perſon who is properly and *eſſentially* God? SERM. VII.

Whether it would enable them to point out any Difference between a Perſon, *by whom all Things*, to which he muſt be preſent, *conſiſt*, as they are ſaid to do by our bleſſed Saviour; and a Perſon *ſtrictly Omnipreſent?* Whether they would not be apt to imagine, that he, whom St. *Paul* ſtiles *over All, God bleſſed for ever*, is the ſupreme God?

Whether, ſuppoſing, according to the *Arian* Hypotheſis, two adorable Gods, one of which muſt infinitely tranſcend the other; the Bulk of Mankind could with a metaphyſical Accuracy adjuſt their Homage to the Dignity of each Being, to whom it was paid, never offering ſovereign and abſolute Adoration where relative was only due; but lowering and heightening their Intentions, in an exact Proportion, ſo as never to exceed, nor to fall ſhort in their religious Addreſſes?

Whether *that* Senſe of numberleſs Paſſages in Scripture relating to the Trinity, which occurs firſt to a Man of *natural Sagacity* and *Honeſty*, who reads the Bible without any View to confirm a darling *Hypotheſis*, is not generally the *true* one?

Whereas

SERM. VII. Whereas the Interpretation, which depends upon refined Subtleties, artificial Turns of Wit and Criticiſm, and ſurprizing laboured Gloſſes, is greatly to be ſuſpected.

Whether a *Polytheiſt* might not explain away all the ſcriptural Proofs for the *Unity* of the divine Nature, by the ſame Subterfuges and evaſive Arts, which an *Antitrinitarian* makes uſe of to elude the Arguments from Scripture to prove a *Trinity* of *Perſons?*

Whether thoſe Texts, which ſeem to imply the Son to be inferior to the Father, may not be reconciled with thoſe, which aſcribed to him all the eſſential Attributes of God, by underſtanding them either of his *human* Nature, as diſtinct from the divine, or of the *miniſterial Office*, which he undertook in the Oeconomy of the Redemption, or of ſuch a *Subordination* only, *viz.* that of a Son to a Father, a mere Relation of *Order*, which is not inconſiſtent with a ſtrict *Equality* of *Nature?*

Whether the excluſive Term of the *only true God*, when applied to the Father, need be ſo rigorouſly interpreted, as to exclude not only *Creatures* and *other Gods*, which

which are *ſeparate* from him; but even the Son and Holy Ghoſt, who are ſo united, as to be *One*, and inſeparably *included* with him? But if it muſt be thus rigorouſly interpreted, whether it will not follow from *Iſaiah* and St. *Paul* compared together, that the Son likewiſe is the only God? *Look unto me, and be ye ſaved, all the Ends of the Earth: For I am God, and there is none elſe: I have ſworn by myſelf, the Word is gone out of my Mouth in Righteouſneſs, and ſhall not return, that unto me every Knee ſhall bow, every Tongue ſhall ſwear.* Iſaiah xlv. 22, 23. Compare the New Teſtament. *We ſhall all ſtand before the Judgment-Seat of Chriſt. For it is written, As I live, ſaith the Lord, every Knee ſhall bow to me, and every Tongue ſhall confeſs to God.* Romans xiv. 10, 11. And again, *At the Name of Jeſus every Knee ſhall bow, of Things in Heaven, and Things in Earth, and Things under the Earth.* Phil. ii. 10. The Application of the Text in *Iſaiah* to Chriſt, is manifeſt from theſe two Paſſages: It is as manifeſt that the Perſon ſpoken of in *Iſaiah* is the only God, *I am God, and there is none elſe:* Therefore Scripture treating of the Unity of God,

SERM. VII.

places it in another Perſon, beſides the Father.

Whether common Chriſtians, without underſtanding *technical* Terms, ſuch as *Mode*, *Perſon*, *Subſtance*, *unmerical*, and *ſpecifical*, may not underſtand, that Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, though *really* diſtinct from one another, may be ſo far one, as to have an *inſeparable Union* of Preſence, Will, and all Perfections; ſo far one, that they can no more *exiſt* or *act aſunder*, than they can *not* exiſt *at all*?

Whether ſuch a Faith, which requires no great Abſtraction of Thought, may not anſwer ſeveral beneficial Ends; and incline them, from the Fulneſs of an ever-grateful Heart, to pay the Tribute of undiſſembled Love and Adoration to the Father, whoſe unfathomable Wiſdom laid and concerted the ſtupendous Plan of our Redemption, to the Son, whoſe unbounded Love undertook the Execution of it, and to the Holy Spirit, whoſe never-failing Grace enables them to fulfil the Conditions of it?

Whether common Chriſtians may not have correcter Notions of the three divine Perſons by reſting in the *general* Truth of

the Doctrine; than ſpeculative Refiners, who want to have *explicit* and *determinate* Ideas of Things incomprehenſible, who are for deſcending into minute Particularities, the Knowledge of which, becauſe they are Matters of *uſeleſs* Speculation and mere Amuſement, is therefore unattainable by us? SERM. VII.

The Objections againſt the myſterious Doctrines of the Goſpel conclude as ſtrongly *for Atheiſm*, as they do *againſt Chriſtianity*. A Perſon, who is an *Half*-thinker, may ſtop at Half-way: But he, who will be at any Expence of Thought, muſt ſee, that for the very ſame Reaſon, for which he rejects the *three Perſons*, viz. becauſe the Doctrine is incomprehenſible; he muſt, if conſiſtent with himſelf, diſbelieve even *one* divine Perſon. There is ſuch a mutual Harmony and Correſpondence in the *Compages* of Truths, that, *if one Member ſuffers, all the Members ſuffer with it; and if one Member be honoured, all the Members rejoice with it.* That ſomething has exiſted from all Eternity, is a Truth, which *forces* itſelf upon the Mind, and *extorts* the Aſſent of every thinking Man, of every Chriſtian, Deiſt, and even Atheiſt. And yet I do not know any thing ſo hard of

SERM. VII. Digeſtion in the Doctrine of the *Trinity*, as there is in the Notion of *Eternity*, viz. that whatever has exiſted without any Beginning, muſt have exiſted *no longer* at this *preſent* Moment of Time, than it had exiſted *Millions* of *Ages ago*. For the preſent Moment of Time is in the Center or Middle between two Eternities, that which is paſt, and that which is to come: The Moment of Time, that was preſent ſome Millions of Ages ago, was then the Center or Middle; and the Moment to come, ſome Millions of Ages hence, will be then the Center.

Chriſtianity does not require us to puzzle ourſelves or others with *metaphyſical* Diſquiſitions; *how* or in what *particular* Manner three are ſo inſeparably united as to be one; no more than natural Religion enjoins us to embarraſs our Minds with Inquiries, how Fore-Knowledge in God is reconcileable with Free-Will in Man; *how* our Father, *which is in Heaven*, can be *about our Path, and about our Bed*; *how*, if he is *extended*, the *Conſciouſneſs* of Being in *Heaven* (though locally *diſtinct* and immenſely *diſtant*) can be *one* and the ſame with the *Conſciouſneſs* of Being on *Earth*; or, how, if he is *unextended*,

tended, he can act every where, without being *ſubſtantially* preſent; or *how* any Thing can be made out of Nothing. In all theſe Points we underſtand the *Terms* of the Propoſitions, and the *Proofs* of them from Reaſon or Revelation, without being able to penetrate into the *Minutiæ* of them, and every curious Nicety relating to them.

Men may pretend to underſtand what they *do* not, and be ambitious of underſtanding, what they *cannot*; graſping at Things, to which their Capacities are not ſuited. The Man, who, without ever conſidering theſe Points as to their *Modus*, ſhould immediately declare he knows nothing of the Matter, has made as great Advances in Knowledge in a Moment; as the Perſon who has impaired his Health, and exhauſted his Spirits in ſuch unconcerning Reſearches. Such are ſeveral Points in natural Philoſophy, as well as Theology. The only Uſe they are of, is to check our Preſumption, and to make us *know* (a very uſeful Part of Knowledge, but of which ſome ſeem incapable,) that there are many Things, which we *cannot know*; that we had much better lay out our Time in knowing ourſelves as to our *moral* Character;

SERM. VII.

the *only* Subject perhaps, as to which the *more minute*, particular and full our Search is, without letting any Thing, however ſmall, eſcape our Notice; the more *uſeful* it will be: Yet this is a Subject, which we generally decline, as to any punctual and thorough Examination. As far as our Ideas extend, our Faith, which muſt keep pace with our Ideas, reaches; and no farther. Thus we believe nothing concerning the preciſe and particular *Modus*, of the divine Unity, of the Reconcileableneſs of Fore-Knowledge with Free-Will, of Creation, *&c.* becauſe we underſtand nothing about it. Only we think it highly unreaſonable not to believe a Doctrine, *as far* as we underſtand it; becauſe there is ſomething in it which we do *not* underſtand. As well might we reject the whole Theory of Viſion, merely becauſe we cannot conceive, how our Ideas, which have *no Dimenſions*, can repreſent Columns, Statues, Buildings, which *have*. We have no very adequate Notions of the *Manner* of Unity even as to *material* Beings: For each material Being, however *one* in *ſome* Reſpect, in *another* is an *Infinity* of Beings, as it is infinitely diviſible: How much more muſt we be at

at a loſs to aſcertain the Manner of the di- SERM. VII.
vine Unity?

Let us then conſider, how far our Point of View extends, what falls within the Reach of every well-conſtituted Eye, and what is *far above out of our Sight*. Let us not venture upon an immenſe Ocean in a little feeble Bark, which will be *carried away with every Wind*, and ſoon overſet. We cannot perceive the *internal* Conſtitution and real Nature of *material* Things, as they are in *themſelves*; we only perceive them, as they are *relative* to, and affect us. Juſt ſo neither Reaſon nor Revelation were given us to attain to a Knowledge of the *intimate* Eſſence of the Deity, or, as ſome affect to call it, his *abſtract metaphyſical Subſtance*, what real Diſtinctions it may admit of, and how they are conſiſtent with its Unity. Revelation was deſigned to let us know what the three Perſons in the Divine Nature have done *for us*, and what *relative* Duties we owe to *them*. So far Knowledge is uſeful; and where Uſefulneſs ends, Darkneſs and Ignorance generally commences. There are in every Branch of Science, as well as in Divinity, *the weightier Matters*, which may be underſtood with a proper Degree

SERM. VII. of Application; and there are alſo ſeveral *Minuteneſſes*, little *Punctilios*, and *fine-ſpun curious* Notions: And thoſe Subjects are intelligible enough in the *groſs* and in *general*; which, when branched out *too minutely* into all their *little Circumſtantials* and *Appendages*, are extremely perplexed and intangled. Juſt as Matter lies open to the View in its *Bulk* and in its *maſſy* and more *ſubſtantial* Parts: Whereas the *intimate* Configuration and Texture of its *finer* and *minuter* Particles will be ever indiſcernible.

It is morally impoſſible we ſhould err in judging *Chriſtianity* to be true; becauſe the Proofs for it are ſtrong, deciſive, and lie *level* to our Capacities; but we may very probably err in fanſying that to be abſurd, which relates to the Nature and *Eſſence* of the Deity, where there is an infinite *Diſproportion* between the Faculty and the Object. If there be any *Criterion* of Truth, if we are not neceſſarily liable to be deceived; we may ſafely conclude, that, what has all the *diſtinctive* Characters of *Truth*, that any ancient Record can have, cannot be a Forgery or Impoſture: But we cannot be ſure, but that in Matters of ſo *high* and *elevated* a Nature, what we *conceive*, (without

out clearly *perceiving* any thing) to border upon an Abſurdity, may not be ſo in itſelf, but merely owing to our Want of more extenſive Views. *One Proof* from a Matter of *Fact* ſhould weigh more to *confirm* a *myſterious* Doctrine, than all the *ideal* and *metaphyſical* Arguments, which fall ſhort of Demonſtration, to *diſprove* it. Becauſe we are very competent *Judges* of Matter of *Fact*; but all our Ideas about the *intrinſic Nature* of God are ſhort and *indiſtinct*: And where our *Ideas* are *indiſtinct*, our Knowledge, which is founded upon them, muſt be ſo too. One intermediate Idea, which is wanting, might, if taken into the Account, make our Concluſion quite different: And one foreign Idea, which has intruded where it has nothing to do, will, like a little Leaven, ſpread and diffuſe itſelf, and give a Tincture to the whole Maſs of our Reaſoning. SERM. VII.

This is only a *general* Anſwer to the Difficulties with which this Doctrine is attended. Under my *ſecond* Head, which muſt be reſerved for another Diſcourſe, I ſhall remove *particular* Objections.

SER-

SERMON VIII.

Preached at the

Lady *MOYER*'s LECTURE.

On the Doctrine of the TRINITY.

MATTHEW XXVIII. 19.

Go ye therefore, and teach all Nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt.

THE Deity is to human Minds, what the main Ocean is to narrow Veſſels: They may take in as much Knowledge of his Nature, as their ſcanty Dimenſions will admit; and yet there will remain an infinite Surplus ſtill, which we want Capacities to receive *; wiſhing, that human Nature was raiſed to SER. VIII.

* See *Cudworth*'s Intellectual Syſtem.

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Sect. VIII.

an higher Perfection, that the divine Nature may be better underſtood, more perfectly loved, and more worthily praiſed.

The Chain of Beings aſcends upwards, from Brutes to Men——from Men, in a beautiful and regular Gradation, to Angels, Archangels, and all thoſe *thouſand thouſands, that ſtand before God, and the ten thouſand times ten thouſand that miniſter unto him.* The Tranſitions in this Poem of Nature, from one Kind to another, are ſo extremely fine and delicate; that we ſcarce can diſtinguiſh, where one ends, and the other begins. Yet the Dignity of the nobleſt of theſe Beings, bears no more Proportion to his, who dwelleth in unapproachable Glory; than a gilded Cloud, on which the Evening Sun has impreſſed its Beams, and enriched with beautiful Stains of Light, does to that great Abyſs of Light, from which it derives its reflected Beauty. He can ſtill make Beings, which ſhall as much ſurpaſs an Archangel of the higheſt Claſs; as an Archangel of the higheſt Claſs ſurpaſſes the moſt groveling Inſect. For every finite Creature, how great ſoever, muſt be infinitely beneath an all-perfect Being. This, however, is the

Being,

Being, whoſe Nature we would meaſure by our own, and make God after our Likeneſs, inſtead of humbly endeavouring to be as like him, as we can. The moſt advanced Notion, which we can form of him, as diſtinct from all his Creatures, is merely *negative*, excepting the Idea of neceſſary Exiſtence, which may imply ſomething poſitive. For Exiſtence, Power, Goodneſs, Wiſdom, *&c.* are not his *peculiar* and *incommunicable* Properties. When they are aſcribed to him *without Bounds*, then they are Ideas *diſtinctive* of him, though Ideas purely *negative*, as implying only a *Negation of Limits*. We cannot extend even our Conjectures concerning the divine Nature, beyond thoſe Ideas, which are derived from Senſation and Reflection: Yet, with theſe ſorry Materials of Knowledge, ſome attempt to dethrone their Saviour and the Holy Ghoſt, and to degrade them into the Rank of Creatures.

I have already proved, from Scripture, that there are more Perſons than one in the divine Eſſence.

I now proceed to clear this Doctrine from the principal Objections againſt it, from the Reaſon of the Thing.

All

Ser. VIII.

All the Objections againſt the Trinity proceed from hence, that Men diſcourſe about an *infinite Being*, as they would about a *finite* one, without conſidering the Difference of the Subject they are upon, and what an immenſe Diſproportion there is. But this, certainly, is not to treat him as what he is: "It is not to treat him, as "a Being infinitely more remote, in the "real Excellency of his Nature, from the "higheſt and perfecteſt of all created Be-"ings; than the greateſt Man, nay, the "pureſt Seraphim, is from the moſt con-"temptible Part of Matter *:" It is not to treat him, as a Being infinitely exceeding, what our narrow Underſtandings can conceive of him. We ought to diſtinguiſh carefully between *Contradictions* ariſing from a plain *Perception* of the Diſagreement of Ideas; and mere *Difficulties* ariſing from the *Defect*, and *Imperfection* of our Ideas. And certainly our Ideas muſt be very imperfect and defective, when the awful and tremendous Eſſence of the Deity is the Subject of our Enquiry. What Arrogance is it for us, whoſe Knowledge reaches no farther than the mere *Shell* and *Surface* of *na-*

* *Locke*'s Eſſay of Underſtanding, Folio. Page 203.

tural

tural Things, to pretend to *ſearch the Almighty to Perfection*, to penetrate into the *intrinſic Nature* of God, and to pronounce with a *deciſive* Air of Self-ſufficiency; he muſt exiſt in this *particular* Manner, and no other? SER. VIII.

The poor groveling Creature, that would audaciouſly ſound the unfathomable Depths of an *uncreated Eſſence*, yet is a *Myſtery* to himſelf, his *little deſpicable* Self; and can no more account for the Union of Soul and Body, two Subſtances, yet one Perſon; than he can comprehend the awful Myſtery of three Perſons, yet one indiviſible Subſtance, in a Subject infinitely removed beyond the narrow Ken of an human Underſtanding.

We believe the Trinity, becauſe we have clear, full and expreſs Proofs of it from Scripture: They, who diſbelieve it, reject it, becauſe of Objections brought againſt it from the *Nature* of the Thing, which is confeſſedly unſearchable, dark and myſterious. Therefore *clear* Proofs are the Foundation of our *Belief:* But ſomething *dark* and *obſcure* is the Foundation of their *Diſbelief.* We have clear Reaſons to found our Faith upon; but they have nothing clear,

SER. VIII. clear, and level to their Understanding to found their Want of Faith upon.

The first and grand Objection against the Divinity of our Saviour, and the Holy Spirit, is this: That either the three Persons must be three *Substances*, which is *Tritheism*; or they must be three *Modes*, which is *Sabellianism*.

It is thus, Man, weak Man, most *assured* of what he is most *ignorant*, and most *ignorant* of what he should know *best*, viz. *himself*, argues against well-supported Truths, from loose Conjectures and visionary Notions, drest up in the *Form* of strict Reasoning, without the *Power* thereof, and then dignifies his crude and indigested Notions with the pompous Name of *Demonstration*, where the *only* Demonstration is, that the Subject admits of *none*.

For in the first place, though in *finite* Beings there is no Distinction but that of Modes and Substances; we cannot hence infer, that the *unsearchable* Nature of *God* may not admit of some other *real* but incomprehensible Distinction; a Distinction *greater* than that of three *Modes*, yet less than that of three *Substances*.

Though an human Soul is a Spirit as well as God; yet Spirit, or immaterial Being, does not point out, as Body does, one *determinate* Kind of Being, but *every Sort* of Beings, that are not corporeal *. It is a negative Idea, a mere Denial of Matter. As my Soul is of a quite different Eſſence from the Table on which I write, though they are both Subſtance: So God tranſcends my Soul, though they are both Spirit, infinitely more, than my Soul can the Table. To argue then from our Nature to the divine; to ſay that becauſe the one admits of no Diſtinction, but that of Modes and Subſtances, the other may not: What is this, but to argue *a pari*, where there is an infinite *Diſparity*, a boundleſs Diſproportion? Sect. VIII.

2*dly*, Thoſe, who object that we muſt, either with the *Sabellians*, maintain the Perſons to be three *Modes* only; or with the *Tritheiſts*, three *Subſtances*, muſt firſt demonſtrate, that Subſtance and Subſtance, however *cloſe* and *inviolable* the *Union* may be, muſt neceſſarily make Subſtances; or that Being and Being cannot be *ſo united*

* See Dr. *Clarke* on the Omnipreſence, in the firſt Volume of his Poſthumous Sermons.

SER. VIII.

as to be *one*. For if they cannot demonſtrate this, there will be this plain Medium between *Sabellianiſm* and *Tritheiſm*, that the three Perſons will be more than three Modes, each being Subſtance; and yet not three Subſtances, becauſe *indiſſoluble Union* of Subſtance *with* Subſtance may conſtitute *Unity*; or whatever is *eſſentially* and *neceſſarily united*, may be *eſſentially* and neceſſarily *one*. Thus our Saviour's Words, *I am in the Father, and the Father in me*, will give the beſt Solution of the Difficulty.

I may obſerve farther, that either Being and Being in Union does *not* make *Beings*; or there is no ſuch Thing as *one* Being in *Nature*, upon *their Hypotheſis*, who maintain, as the moſt able Defender of *Arianiſm* does maintain, that ſpiritual, as well as corporeal Beings, are *extended*. For each *extended* Being, it is well known, is nothing but *Being* and *Being* in *Union*; and only one, becauſe of the *Continuity* of the *Parts*. He (that great Maſter of Reaſon) ſuppoſed the Deity to be *infinitely expanded*. It was likewiſe his Opinion, that there is no Medium between a Being and *Nothing*, and that *Perſon* is an *intelligent Being*. Well;

The Deity, according to his Scheme, must consist of an *Infinity of Parts.*——*Each* of these Parts must be either *a* Being, or *Nothing.*——Each of these Parts must be likewise an *intelligent* Being. For an *intelligent Whole* cannot be made up of *unintelligent* Parts.——And if *each* of these Parts be an *intelligent* Being;——then *each* must be a *Person*:—The Consequence of which is, that according to his *Hypothesis*, there must be *as many Persons* in an *infinitely expanded Substance*, as there are *Parts*. Thus this great Philosopher (for a great Philosopher he certainly was) at the same Time that he opposed the *Catholic* Scheme of *three* Persons, in the same undivided Substance; must, if consistent with himself, maintain *many more* than three Persons, even an *Infinity* of Persons in the same Substance. SER. VIII.

Such is the Frailty of human Nature, even in great Men. They can see the least *Mote* of a Difficulty in another's Scheme; they cannot behold the *Beam*, that is in their own.

Nor was he singular in that Opinion: Several able Philosophers, both at home and abroad, have embraced the Scheme of *Extension*. Now the same Principle, *viz.* that

Sect. VIII. Being and Being *in Union*, does not make a *Plurality* of Beings, which acquits them from the Charge of *Polytheiſm*, clears the *Orthodox* likewiſe from the Imputation of *Tritheiſm*. If this Principle does not hold true, they muſt conſequently maintain an *Infinity* of Gods; if it *does*, we cannot be ſaid to maintain a *Trinity* of Gods.

It is not material to examine, whether the *Hypotheſis* of Extenſion is true or falſe; the *Principle*, upon which alone the Patrons of it can be vindicated from the Charge of aſſerting a *Multitude* of Deities, will ſtand its Ground.

Let us try the whole Force of *Metaphyſics*; let us think as much as poſſible upon the Stretch; yet, after the utmoſt Expence of Thought, the only Conceptions we can frame of the divine Unity are Indiviſibility and Simplicity; the one amounting to no more than a Negation of Diviſion, and the other of any foreign or *heterogeneous* Mixtures. He who from theſe two *negative* Ideas would *poſitively* infer, that there muſt be only one Perſon in the divine Nature, muſt form a Demonſtration, where he has not ſufficient *Data* to build upon. It is hard to fix a poſitive Principle

Principle of *Individuation*, from whence we may clearly argue, even in *finite* Beings. I know ſome make *Conſciouſneſs* the *Ground* of *Unity*: But then what is the Ground of *Conſciouſneſs*? Nothing can be the *Ground*, Reaſon, or Principle of any Thing, which is, in the Order of our Ideas and of Nature, *ſubſequent* to the Thing, of which it is ſuppoſed to be the Ground. But Conſciouſneſs is *ſubſequent* to the Unity; and therefore *not* the *Ground* of it. Conſciouſneſs is that *reflex* Act, by which I *know* what I am: Now, if I muſt *be* what I am, (one or more) before I *know* what I am; then Conſciouſneſs muſt be *ſubſequent* to the Unity. The *being* what I am, muſt be the Foundation of my *knowing* what I am, and not *vice verſâ*. Conſciouſneſs, a perſonal Act, does not *conſtitute* but *preſuppoſe*, the *Perſonality*, from which the perſonal Act reſults. It may be added, that, if we are only one becauſe conſcious; then we put off Unity, like our Cloaths, when we lye down and fall aſleep; and reſume it again when we awake. This Scheme bears a near Reſemblance to his, who made Neceſſity a mere Mode of Exiſtence, in the Order of our Ideas, antece- SER. VIII.

SER. VIII.

dent to, and the Ground of, the Subſtance, whoſe Mode and Attribute it is: Juſt ſo, this *Hypotheſis* ſuppoſes Conſciouſneſs to be the *Ground* of an *Identity*, which muſt be *prior* to the Conſciouſneſs. We cannot juſtly argue, that we are *conſcious* we are one,——*therefore* we are one: The Proceſs of the Argument ſhould be thus: We *are* one—therefore we are *conſcious* we are one: The Truth of our conſcious Knowledge depending upon the Nature of Things; and not the Nature of Things upon our conſcious Knowledge.

Diſmiſſing therefore Conſciouſneſs as the Ground of Unity, we can advance no farther, than that Maxim of the Schools, *Unum eſt indiviſum in ſe.* The Perſons then are each *Being* —— becauſe they exiſt, inveſted with *diſtinct Offices* and peculiar *Relations*; but not *Beings*, becauſe they do not exiſt *ſeparately*.

And this puts me in mind, ſecondly, of another Objection; that if Union of Subſtance with Subſtance, conſtitutes one Subſtance; then Union of Perſons with each other muſt conſtitute one Perſon.

But to this I anſwer, that the Objection ſuppoſes Unity of Perſon and Subſtance to be

be the ſame, which wants to be proved. Sect. VIII.
We uſe the Word Plurality of *Perſons* to expreſs that the Subſtance, however united, is yet *diſtinguiſhed* by *appropriate* Relations, as that of a Son to a Father, and by diſtinct Offices: Whereas Plurality of *Subſtances* implies, the Subſtance to be *divided* or *diviſible*. So many *ſeparable* Perſons are ſo many *Subſtances*; but Perſons, *incapable* of any *Diſunion* or Diviſion, are *one Subſtance*. Obſerving that Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt are every where, in Scripture, dignified with the ſame infinite Perfections of Power, Knowledge, *&c.* and inveſted with the ſame eſſential Attributes; we conclude, they have all the ſame Eſſence; the Eſſence being nothing but an Aſſemblage of all the eſſential Attributes: But finding, that they have likewiſe perſonal Properties, diſtinct Offices and Relations, we conclude they are diſtinct Perſons.

It may be objected, that the Son is not ſelf-exiſtent: And if not ſelf-exiſtent, then not neceſſarily exiſtent. But I reply, the Ideas are diſtinct: The former implying, *whence* a Being is; the latter, *what* he is: Self-exiſtent, that the Being is of *none*; neceſſarily-exiſtent, that the Being *immu-*

Sect. VIII.

tably exists: The one is a mere *negative* Idea, being only a Negation of any Cause of Existence; the latter implies something *positive, viz.* Permanency, Stability, and an infinite Ability to exist. The Son, though he is of the Father, and therefore not self-existent; yet is necessarily-existent, being the *Jehovah*, the τὸ ὄν, and is co-eternal with the Father; Just as Thought, however subsequent in the Order of our Ideas, is co-eval with an eternal thinking Mind. Nor is there any more Difficulty, in the Notion of an eternal Reference of the Son to the Father, than there is in the Notion of Eternity itself. It is ridiculous to object that God is *a self-existent Person, of all possible Perfections.* For if the Objectors can prove, that Self-Existence and necessary Existence are *synonymous* Terms, then the *Logos* must be self-existent, because he is necessarily existent: And indeed the *Nature* is self-existent, though the *Personality* proceeds from the Father by such a *necessary* and *eternal* Act, as those, whereby he *loves, enjoys* and *contemplates himself.* But if necessary Existence be distinct from Self-Existence; Self-Existence, as *distinct* from necessary Existence, does not imply any

any *poſitive* Perfection: And therefore the Son, notwithſtanding he be not a ſelf-exiſtent *Perſon*, may be veſted with all the poſitive Attributes of the Deity.

After our Adverſaries have darkened this Subject, by *metaphyſical* Objections, and ſpeculative Niceties concerning Modes and Subſtances, Perſon and Eſſence, ſelf-exiſtent and neceſſarily-exiſtent; which, if we do not reply to, they tell us, *all that we can ſay will be to no Purpoſe*; it is very unfair, thirdly, to object that this Doctrine is too obſcure to be made an Article of Faith; the common People having not Capacities to apprehend it.

To this I anſwer, that the common People may underſtand the *Doctrine* of the Trinity; and yet not be competent Maſters of the *Controverſy* about the Trinity. They may ſurvey the plain Scripture *Ground* upon which it ſtands, without being able to comprehend the elaborate *Entrenchments* and *Fortifications*, which are raiſed to repel the vigorous Attacks of its Enemies. Secondly, the Doctrine is very clear as to the *Proofs*; and as to the *Manner*, not more obſcure than Eternity, Self-Exiſtence, and Omnipreſence, which every Body muſt believe.

SER. VIII.

believe. A Man of plain Senſe may believe, and have general Ideas, that Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, ſo far really diſtinct as not to be one the other, may yet be ſo inſeparably united as to be one in as ſtrict a Senſe as any Thing he can frame a Notion of here, is one; and that though three Perſons multiply and divide the *human* Nature; it does not follow, that they muſt divide or multiply the *divine*, which tranſcends ours, infinitely more than our Nature does that of inſenſate Matter. "The "Perſons are *diſtinct* and real, as any *other* "Perſons are; but ſo united withal, as *no* "*other* Perſons are or can be: And there- "fore they are not (like *other* Perſons) as "*many Beings*, as *Perſons*, but *one* Being "only." Juſt ſo a Man may have a *general* Idea of Eternity: He may *underſtand*, (without being able to *imagine* any Thing about it) that there muſt be a Being, who had no Beginning of Exiſtence: But when he would endeavour to obtain a more *explicit*, *diſtinct*, and *determinate* Idea, the Mind is quite overwhelmed, by an Object too big, unwieldy, and diſproportioned to be graſped and managed by it. In vain our Mind widens, to take in the vaſt Idea of

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an Eternity; in vain it adds Thouſands to Thouſands, and Millions to Millions; our Thoughts are quite loſt and ſwallowed up in Infinity. So far is it from being true, that, as one expreſſes it, *Religion ends, where Myſtery begins*; that Religion *begins* with a Myſtery, the greateſt Myſtery of all, the Self-Exiſtence and Eternity of God. Let a Man acquaint us, how an Eternity can be *paſt*, unleſs it was *once preſent*; and how that could be *once preſent*, which had *never* a *Beginning*. If you *believe* a God, you muſt believe Myſteries, it having been fully proved by a very great Writer *, that, whatever has exiſted from Eternity, exiſts in a Manner, of which we can frame no Notion, but what is big with *ſeeming* Abſurdities. *Seeming* Abſurdities, I ſay, not *real*. For they, like thoſe, with which the Diviſibility of Matter and Infinites of all Sorts in Mathematics are encumbered, are only Indications of the Defectiveneſs of our Ideas. But if you deny a God, then nothing will be, properly ſpeaking, *myſterious* to you: For Myſteries have their *bright*, as well as dark Side: Every Thing will be

* See the 8th Volume of the Spectators. No 590.

thoroughly

SER. VIII.

thoroughly dark and abſolutely *unintelligible*. For we can account for nothing in Nature, without ſuppoſing an Author of it.

The *Generality* walk on in the plain high Road of common Senſe: They ſee the Doctrine of the Trinity is edifying, and not more unintelligible, than that a Being *which is in Heaven*, ſhould be *about our Path, and about our Bed:* They are your *metaphyſical* Adventurers, that loſe themſelves, and others, in ſtudied Intricacies. *Time, Place* and *Motion*, are what every Body knows in the *Groſs*; and yet let them paſs through the Hands of a *Metaphyſician*, and they become too fine and ſubtle for each *groſſer* View. The moſt illiterate Perſons have a ſuperficial and obvious Notion of them, ſuch as anſwers all the *Purpoſes* of Life; though they cannot form accurate and *Philoſophical* Ideas of them, nor anſwer all the Difficulties, which the Author of the hiſtorical Dictionary has ſtarted againſt one of them in the Article of *Zeno*. It is thus as to the Trinity: The Doctrine, as to the main Subſtance, "is clear enough "to be looked upon; though too deep to "be ſeen through *." We may take a *gene-*

* See Dr. *Waterland's Importance of the Trinity*, pag. 20.

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ral View of it, as that Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt may be diſtinct, without being divided; united but not confounded: We then bewilder ourſelves, when we would too nicely ſcan the *minute* Circumſtances, and would fix a *particular* and *determinate Mode.* SER. VIII.

Indeed, in moſt metaphyſical Diſputes, we are like Men upon *marſhy* Ground: We may ſkim lightly over the *Surface*, and take a *general* Survey of the Nature of the Soil: But if we dwell too long upon any *particular* Spot; if we muſt *critically* and *minutely* examine into the Ground on which we tread, we *ſink* of courſe; and the more we ſtruggle to get free; the more, except we have uncommon Strength, we are *gravelled* irretrievably.

The Truth of the Caſe is this: Our Proſpect is bounded by a very narrow Horizon; our Faculties limited within a very narrow Sphere of Activity. *Within* that Sphere lie the Proofs of God's Attributes, and of Matter of Fact, upon which Revelation depends: And within that Sphere Things, in the main, are *eaſy* and *obvious* to us. *Beyond* it, *all*, except ſome few negative indeterminate Ideas, is an immenſe

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Sect. VIII.

Blank to us: And *beyond* it, if any Thing, the *Manner* of the Divine Exiſtence, and the *Nature* of the *Unity* and *Diſtinction* in the tremendous Deity, are *infinitely* removed.

I may obſerve farther, that the *Antitrinitarians firſt* introduced *Metaphyſics* into this Queſtion, on purpoſe to perplex it with laboured Abſtractions, and ſtudied Refinements; and then the *Catholics* were obliged, though reluctant, to follow them through all their Mazes and Windings, to ſhew that the Doctrine would abide the Teſt of *Metaphyſics*. For if ſome Mens Underſtandings, like the Earth *under the Curſe*, will be fruitful of little elſe, but *Thorns and Thiſtles* to entangle and perplex; it is a Duty incumbent upon the Labourers in the Vineyard, to *weed* the Soil, and not let the Doctrine be *over-run* and *choaked* by them.

Whoever has examined all the wild Paradoxes, and particular Tenets, of the Philoſophers, ancient and modern; muſt be ſenſible, that *Stupidity* has not miſled the *Unthinking* into more palpable *Abſurdities*; than an *Affectation* of thinking *out* of the *common Road*, has betrayed ſome of the *fineſt Geniuſes* and *ableſt* Scholars.

Nor

Nor is Reaſon oftener in ſome Men the Dupe of the *Paſſions*; than it is in others of the *Imagination*, of an inventive, adventurous Imagination, launching out into thoſe Depths, where it can find no ſure Footing.

The grand Inlet of Error has been to argue *a priori*, from antecedent philoſophical Notions; and then to *pervert* the Scripture to countenance thoſe Notions, to preſs it into the Service, and compel it to come in; which has been the Source of *Hereſy*: Or elſe to *reject* it; which has been the Source of *Infidelity*.

And what is this, but to puſh our Enquiries beyond our Capacities? Matter of Fact (a Revelation ſupported by well-atteſted Matters of Fact) is here *all in all*: But to argue from the *abſtract Nature* of the Thing, of which we know little or nothing, is what we may *miſcall* human *Reaſon*; but is in reality *human Conjecture*, not to ſay, human *Folly* and *Pride*. It is to pretend to *Wiſdom*, without having, what is the *Beginning* of Wiſdom, a reverential Fear of God before our Eyes. There is a *metaphyſical Knight-Errantry*, a *ſpeculative Fool-Hardineſs*, in ſome very great

Ser. VIII. great but too enterprizing Men, which tempts them to *grapple* with Objects, to which every judicious Stander-by ſees their Strength to be vaſtly unequal.

And *whatever Abſurdities* ſome People may alledge, without being able to prove, againſt the Trinity; *the greateſt Abſurdity* of all is, that weak ignorant Creatures ſhould *pretend* to fathom an *infinite* Subject with a very *ſcanty Line*. Want of Humility in Points of ſo high a Nature, is always, in ſome degree, Want of Senſe. There may be a bright and ſparkling Imagination, without Humility; but there can be no ſuch thing as a well-poiſed Judgment, and ſound ſober Senſe. For good Senſe teaches us to be diffident of our own Senſe, where the Subject is placed beyond the Boundaries of clear and diſtinct Perception. *Thoſe Repugnancies to Reaſon* which ſome People *imagine* they had diſcovered in this Point, are like the Retrogradations of the Planets and the *Irregularities* of their Motions: They are only *ſeeming*, not *real*, and are owing to the *Height* of the Objects, their *Diſtance* from us, and the *Incommodiouſneſs* of *our Situation* for a juſt Diſcernment of theſe Things: Could

we ſee from a *proper Point of View*, we ſhould find, that what *appeared to us* irregular, was *in itſelf* equal and uniform. SER. VIII.

Let us then proceed, in our Reſearches after Truth, with all due Humility and Modeſty. It is better to be in the Wrong in ſome few Points, with Modeſty and Humility; than to be in the Right, (which is not often the Caſe) with thoſe proud and preſumptuous Reaſoners, who ſtand upon Terms with their Maker, and loſe the *humble* and meek *Chriſtian*, in the vain *Diſputer* of *this World*. For however valuable a clear Diſcernment, and an uncommon Reach of Thought may be; yet Humility, which does *not exerciſe itſelf in Matters which are too high*, is undoubtedly far more amiable in the Sight of that Being, who though he *inhabiteth Eternity*, yet *dwells with the Lowly and Contrite*. It is better *having one Eye*, though we do not ſee ſo clearly, *to enter into Life*; than *having two Eyes*, with all our Quick-Sightedneſs, and enlarged Views, *to be caſt into Hell*: Which may be the Caſe, if Miſbelief in an important practical Point, is occaſioned, not by any Defect of Underſtanding, but by the Perverſeneſs of the

SER. VIII. Will. To withhold our Aſſent, till *all* Difficulties *are* cleared up, and *all* Intricacies unravelled, is very unreaſonable. For *All cannot* be cleared up, unleſs we, who *hardly gueſs aright at Things before us*, could comprehend, whatever He, whoſe *Glory is above the Heavens, is* in himſelf, and whatever he does for us. We then give the beſt Proofs of the Strength of our Reaſon, when we own the *Weakneſs* of it, in the *deep Things of God*; humbly content to *ſee* him *through a Glaſs darkly*; till we can ſee him *as he is, Face to Face:* To whom, Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, be aſcribed, *&c.*

MVSEVM BRITAN NICVM

FINIS.